## *Worker occupations, 1971-1975: a sociohistorical analysis of the development and spread of sit-ins, work-ins and worker co-operative in Britain*

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FOR JULIE . . .

WHO OCCUPIES MY SOUL.

# A B S T R A C T

The "work-in" at the Upper Clyde Shipyards, in July 1971, shattered age-old traditions of industrial relations in Britain. It was the first of over two-hundred workplace occupations to occur in the period up to the end of 1975.

This thesis sets out to examine how it was that such actions occurred and developed. Several factors are focussed on as being associated with these developments, albeit in varying degrees of importance. These are the existance of a socio-economic crisis with consequent effects at the micro level; the 'mishandling' of that crisis at both the macro (government) and the micro (company) level; the existance of a numerically strong and "mature" trade union movement containing a growing militant infrastructure in the form of shop stewardships; and the existance of a political (Communist Party/CPGB) and industrial (Engineering Union/AUEW) leadership ready and able to capitalise on the situation through that infrastructure.

Within the context of the development of occupations the advent of the "Workers' Co-operative" is given attention as an important development. It is argued that while these, to some extent, respresented the realisation of the challenge inhereent in the workplace occupation their political impact was of limited effect. They grew out of a situation of widespread militancy which included the regular occurrance of workplace occupations, and the winning of office by a Labour Party ready to accede to some of the demands of that militancy.



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# Worker Occupations, 1971-1975: a socio-historical analysis of the development and spread of sit-ins, work-ins and worker co-operatives in Britain.

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Henry Boot.
Crosfield Electronics.
Cubitt.
Camco.
Educational Audio Visual Inc.
Ferranti.
L.Gardner and sons.
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# I N I T I A L S.

| | |
|---|---|
| A.C.T.T. | Association of Cinematograph Television & Allied Technicians |
| A.E.U. | Amalgamated Engineering Union |
| A.F.L. | American Federation of Labor. |
| A.M.M.A. | Association of Metallurgical, Mechanical & Affiliated Industrialists. |
| A.P.A.C. | Association of Patternmakers and Allied Craftsmen. |
| A.P.E.X. | Ass'n of Professional, Executive, Clerical & Computer Staff. |
| A.S.B.S.B.S.W. | Amalgamated Society of Boilermakers, Shipwrights, Blacksmiths, and Structural Workers. |
| A.S.L.E.F. | Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen. |
| A.S.T.M.S. | Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs. |
| A.S.T.W. | Amalgamated Society of Textile Workers & Kindred Trades. |
| A.T.T.I. | Association of Teachers in Technical Institutions. |
| A.U.B.T.W. | Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers. |
| A.U.E.W. | Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers. |
| B.A.C. | British Aircraft Corporation |
| B.C.P. | Briant Colour Printing. |
| B.I.C.C. | British Insulated Calender Cables. |
| B.I.S.A.K.T.A. | British Iron, Steel & Kindred Trades Association. |
| B.L.M.C. | British Leyland Motor Corporation. |
| B.P. | British Petroleum. |
| B.S.A. | Birmingham Small Arms. |
| B.S.C. | British Steel Corporation. |
| B.U. | Bakers' Union |
| C.A.C.T.L. | Campaign against Criminal Trespass Laws. |
| C.E.U. | Construction Engineering Union. |
| C.G.L. | Confederazione Generale del Lavoro. |
| C.G.T. | Confederation Generale du Travail. |

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| C.G.T.U. | Confederation Generale du Travail Unitaire. |
| C.I.O. | Congress of Industrial Organisations. |
| C.I.R. | Commission for Industrial Relations. |
| C.I.S. | Counter Information Services. |
| C.N.T. | Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo. |
| C.S.E.U. | Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions. |
| C.P. | Communist Party. |
| C.P.G.B. | Communist Party of Great Britain. |
| C.R.S. | Compagnie Republicaine de Securite. |
| D.A.T.A. | Draughtsmen and Allied Technicians Association. |
| D.E.A. | Department of Economic Affairs. |
| D.T.I. | Department of Trade and Industry. |
| E.E.F. | Engineering Employers' Federation. |
| E.E.T.P.U. | Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunication & Plumbing Trades Union |
| F.A.I. | Federation of Iberian Anarchists. |
| F.I.O.M. | Federazione Italiana Operai Metallurgici. |
| G.E.C. - E.E. | General Electric Company - English Electric. |
| G.K.N. | Guest, Keen and Nettlefolds. |
| G.L.C. Staff Fed. | Greater London Council Staff Federation. |
| G.M. | General Motors |
| I.C.I. | Imperial Chemical Industries. |
| I.C.O.M. | Industrial Common Ownership Movement. |
| I.P.D. | International Property Development Co. |
| I.S. | International Socialism Group. |
| I.T.G.W.U. | Irish Transport and General Workers Union. |
| I.T.T. | International Telephone & Telegraph. |
| I.W.C. | Institute for Workers Control. |
| I.W.G.B. | Industrial Workers of Great Britain, |

| | |
|---|---|
| I.W.W. | Industrial Workers of the World. |
| K.M.E. | Kirkby Manufacturing and Engineering Co. |
| L.C.D.T.U. | Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions. |
| M.F.A. | Armed Forces Movement (Portugal). |
| N.A.L.G.O. | National Association of Local Government Officers. |
| N.A.T.K.E. | National Association of Theatrical, Television & Kine Employees. |
| N.A.T.S.O.P.A. | Nat'nl Society of Operative Printers, Graphical & Media Personnel. |
| N.C.B. | National Coal Board. |
| N.G.A. | National Graphical Association. |
| N.I.R.C. | National Industrial Relations Court. |
| N.J.N.C. | National Joint Negotiating Council. |
| N.R.A. | National Industrial Recovery Act. |
| N.S.M.M. | National Society of Metal Mechanics. |
| N.S.P. | National Society of Painters. |
| N.U.D.B.T.W. | National Union of Dyers, Bleachers and Textile Workers. |
| N.U.F.L.A.T. | National Union of Footwear, Leather & Allied Trades. |
| N.U.F.T.O. | National Union of Furniture Trade Operatives. |
| N.U.G.M.W. | National Union of General and Municipal Workers. |
| N.U.J. | National Union of Journalists. |
| N.U.M. | National Union of Mineworkers. |
| N.U.R. | National Union of Railwaymen. |
| N.U.S | National Union of Seamen. |
| N.U.S.M.W. | National Union of Sheet Metal Workers. |
| N.U.S.S. | National Union of School Students. |
| N.U.V.B. | National Union of Vehicle Builders. |
| N.V.T. | Norton, Villiers, Triumph Co. |
| P.C.F. | French Communist Party. |
| P.C.P. | Portuguese Communist Party. |

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| P.I.B. | Prices and Incomes Board. |
| P.O.E.U. | Post Office Engineers' Union |
| P.S. | Portuguese Socialist Party |
| P.S.I. | Italian Socialist Party. |
| R.C.A. | RCA Corporation. |
| R.H.P. | Ransome, Hoffmann and Pollard. |
| S.D.N. | Scottish Daily News. |
| S.G.A. | Scottish Graphical Association. |
| S.I.B. | Shipbuilding Industry Board. |
| S.L.A.D.E. | Society of Lithographic Artists, Designers, Engravers. |
| S.L.L. | Socialist Labour League. |
| S.O.G.A.T. | Society of Graphical and Allied Trades. |
| S.S.W.C.M. | Shop Stewards and Workers' Committee Movement. |
| S.T.C. | Standard Telephone Cables. |
| S.T.U.C. | Scottish Trades Union Congress. |
| S.W.M.F. | South Wales Miners' Federation. |
| S.W.P. | Socialist Worker Party. |
| T.A.S.S. | Technical & Supervisory Staffs (section of the AUEW) |
| T.G.W.U. | Transport and General Workers Union. |
| T.I. | Tube Investment Co. |
| T.S.S.A. | Transport Salaried Staffs Association. |
| T.U.C. | Trade Union Congress. |
| U.A.W. | United Auto Workers Union. |
| U.C.A.T.T. | Union of Construction, Allied Trades & Technicians. |
| U.C.S. | Upper Clyde Shipbuilders. |
| U.K.A.P.E. | United Kingdom Association of Professional Engineers. |
| U.P.W. | Union of Post Office Workers. |
| U.R.W. | United Rubber Workers Union. |
| U.S.D.A.W. | Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers. |

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| U.S.I. | Unione Sindacale Italiana. |
| W.F.M. | Western Federation of Miners. |
| W.R.P. | Workers Revolutionary Party. |
| Y.C.L. | Young Communist League. |

# I N T R O D U C T I O N

CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION.

## The Focus of Attention.

Like many other theses this project has taken various twists and turns before settling on a particular focus of attention. Originally it began as a socio-historical account of a railwaymen's struggle to save their jobs. The 'historical' element was to describe and analyse the campaining events of the workers at North Road Railway Workshop (Darlington) in their efforts to prevent closure over the period 1962 - 66. The 'socio' was to attempt to explain how it was that, with roughly similar situat--ions, one Darlington workshop group (North Road) chose to take militant action while another two (Faverdale works and English Electric) did not take action in the face of their closure in the same period and in the same town.

A number of research problems occured. As they had been closed for a period of between six and ten years information on any of the three workshops was difficult to obtain: this was particularly the case in regard to Faverdale and English Electric works. Although some assistance was available on North Road it was sporadic and extremely slow, resting on the availability of a very busy, overworked, Engineering Union (AUEW) lay official.

The study was then broadened to focus on the question of 'militancy in redundancy situations', seeking to find current case studies to explain how it was that some groups of workers chose to take militant action, and others did not, in the face of the loss of their jobs.

By now (1973) the Upper Clyde Shipyard (UCS) workers had staged their famous "work-in" and a whole spate of sit-ins had occurred.

Increasingly my attention was drawn to these actions: not merely case studies of militant action to save jobs but radically new action. The question had become more specific as the weight of material mounted up in one main direction. The study settled on the vexing question of asking what factors had brought about a novel development in trade union action.

Here was a unique situation. Much of the material gathered on this area of concern was dealing with a radical departure in British trade union industrial action and yet it contained very little explanation as to why the development had occurred. The void could be merely refered to or it could be analysed: I chose to attempt the latter course.

As to the fate of the original study two directions developed,

i) a history of the struggle was written (but focussing on an analysis of its peculiar occurrence and omitting the failure of the other two workshop groups). It remains an, as yet, unpublished history which describes the unique features of the campaign and analyses the question of railway closures and transport policy.

ii) some factors from all three workshop situations which throw light on the subject now in focus have been extracted. These are detailed below.

Finally, in the course of my research it was felt necessary to attempt to fill the theoretical void on the subject of worker occupations in an immediate and practical way. This has led to the publication of two or three items[1] which account for a substantial proportion of this

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1. 'Factory Work-ins', New Society, 22nd. August 1974/ Worker Occupations and the North East experience, commissioned by the (North East) Trade Union Studies Information Unit (TUSIU), published June 1976/ 'Worker Sit-ins', review article in Personnel Review, Vol.5, No.4, Autumn, 1976/

thesis in outline.

A Question of Material Substance.

The aim of this study is to explain the development and spread of worker occupations. This necessitated attempting to gain an overall picture of of the large number of such actions which had occurred, and were in progress. Given a lack of any previous attempt to provide any overall perspective it was felt that any analysis needed to be welded to developments in an historical context. In short, this work set out to tell the story of the development of the worker occupations while seeking to explain why they occurred when they did.

A number of research problems were encountered. There was very little direct source material in any collected form, and even less in any theoretically relevant form. Historical material refered to actions prior to the last world war. Current material was limited to one or two major actions - primarily the UCS and (Liverpool) Fisher-Bendix occupations. The work of collection remained to be done. A major start was made by drawing from reports from national and local newspapers. The primary sources were 'The Morning Star', 'The Times', 'The Sunday Times' and 'The Guardian'; these were analysed regularly over the whole period 1971-75. To a lesser extent the following national papers were draw upon - 'The Sun', 'The Observer', 'The Daily Mirror', 'The Financial Times' and 'The Daily Telegraph'. To the same extent certain 'left' press papers were covered[1] - 'Socialist Worker', 'Voice of the Unions', and the

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1. The wide coverage of worker occupations by the 'Morning Star' precluded the necessity of any extensive reading of other left papers.

'Newsletter'. To a larger extent 'Labour Research' was used for material. In addition existing studies of occupations were drawn upon.

In the meantime it came to light that several other researchers were engaged in a similar collection task. Their data has since been incorporated but it should be pointed out that my own work was the more advanced: Teulings and Leijnse's work[1] appeared only in Dutch and Dr. Teulings was kind enough to seek my advice regarding British occupations[2]; Coate's work[3] does discuss a large number of occupations but he references my own work[4] in regard to an overall perspective; the Metra Consulting Agency has produced two reports[5] but each only covers a six-month period and manages to miss out a number of actions reported in the sources they claim to have scanned[6]. Nonetheless, in each case my overall knowledge of British worker occupations was added to by consulting these sources.

A second major problem occurred in attempting to gain direct information through interviews with participants in the events. Initially the leading union conveners and shop stewards of over one-hundred occupations were surveyed to gain an overall impression. Only ten replies were received and very little follow-up was offered. Through perserverance some degree of personal contact was made with several leading figures but the nature of the interviews was limited both by time

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1. 1974.

2. That was in the Autumn of 1975. Dr.Teulings' work on other European occupations was well in advance of my own.

3. 1973.

4. 1977, p.11

5. 1972 and 1975.

6. A critique of both studies is contained in Personnel Review, op cit.

and by context.

With reference to the occupations at the UCS, Tress Engineering (Newcastle), Propytex (Hartlepool), Courtaulds (Spennymoor), Briant Colour Printing (London), and Lovell (London) I gained active experience through numerous meetings of the Communist Party (CPGB)[1]. In the course of active work as a member of the CPGB I had many discussions, directly related to worker occupations, with various people including Alex McFadden (Tress occupation leader), Tam Brotherton and Alan Ritchie (respectively, shop steward and apprentices leader at UCS), and Pete Kavanagh (Lovell). I first encountered the Propytex work-in leader - Roy Kyte Powell - at a CPGB District Congress where he announced that the factory had been occupied; I have since had many discussions with him. The Briant's work-in was also a focus of 'party work'. In addition, I have since spent some days interviewing Bill Freeman, the leading steward. Bill provided a wealth of information which included access to various documents belonging to Briant's Joint (union) Chapel[2]. The Courtaulds' occupation initially proved difficult to study. The leading convener refused me an interview. Usually this would have cut off access to others involved. I did manage, however, to observe a mass meeting of those in occupation and was able to interview a journalist, who was in the confidence of the workforce, and who covered the story completely for a local newspaper. Through this journalist I was also able to interview

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1. At various meetings throughout 1971 - 75 I was personally involved in discussions directly regarding occupations. At several of these meetings leading participants in occupations were usually also involved.

2. An interview with Mrs. Freeman also threw some interesting light on the subject.

one of the leading stewards involved along with the factory's engineering union convener[1].

Beyond these six cases information on several other occupations was developed in several ways. Information on three Scottish occupations failed to materialise initially when questionnaires where not returned from two (Plessey, Alexandria and McNeil, Glasgow) and leading stewards - who had agreed to an interview - were purged at another (Scottish Daily News). In the latter case I was forced to fall back on a (large) number of press reports. Some information on the remaining two, plus valuable insight into the UCS occupation, was gleaned from an interview with the (then) Scottish correspondent of the 'Morning Star', Arthur Milligan. In the North East I was able to have extensive interviews with two of the initiators of the Sunderland occupation at Coles Cranes. Here, as with Briant Colour Printing, I had access to a wealth of documented material[2]. Written comments to a questionnaire were returned by the two leading activists of the Bainbridge (Co.Durham) occupation, and Roy Kyte-Powell provided some information on the Ever Ready occupation[3]. Written replies were also supplied by conveners and leading stewards at River Don Works (Sheffield)[4], Sexton and Son (Fakenham), Snow Engineering (Sheffield),

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1. The engineers were not directly involved in the occupation but the convener was able to provide a store of information concerning it.

2. The interviews involved the full-time works' convener and a divisional official of the white collar union APEX as well as a series of discussions with the APEX Region's National Executive member.

3. Kyte-Powell had given advice and help to Ever Ready stewards and thus had first hand knowledge of some of their problems. In many other cases information concerning such inter-solidarity between occupations was supplied by participants of various occupations.

4. Additional information was gained from the CPGB's 'Steel Collective'.

Strachans (Hants)[1], Tillotson (Liverpool), Hawker-Siddely (Bolton), B.P. Chemicals (Stroud), Balfour Darwin (Sheffield), Crosfield Electronics (London), Cammel Laird (Liverpool), and Allis Chalmers (wales). In the case of Sumlock Anita (depots throughout Britain) I was able to have an extensive interview with the Scientific Union (ASTMS) official involved, and again had access to documentation.

In the case of the worker co-operatives a similar pattern emerges. An early attempt to gain access to Leadgate Engineering (Co. Durham) failed, although a letter was received from the convener supplying some answers to my questions. Attempts to gain access to Triumph (Meriden) and K.M.E. (Liverpool)[2] both failed and with no replies at all. That was in 1975. The situation was finally overcome in 1976 with access to all three co-operatives being effected in the form of a study tour of visiting Dutch civil servants and personnel officers[3]. The tour was very effective in two ways - i) I was able to see the situation in each factory at first hand as well as question leading participants, ii) further insights were gained from the very probing and questioning Dutch group who were very sympathetic to the concept of worker co-operatives and thus very critical in their questioning. The entire tour was arranged so that discussion of the various factory visits could take place and be analysed[4].

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1. Additional information was gained through a local trades council of which I was an active member. The trades council discussed the issue on at least 3 separate occassions.

2. This was formerly the Fisher-Bendix factory.

3. The study tour was arranged by me through the offices of Dr.Ad Teulings The Dutch group, as part of their employment, attended a 4 year course (on a one day per week basis) at the Akademie De Horst, Driebergen.

4. As a result I was asked to prepare a report for the group to submit to the Dutch Government, which had supplied a small travel grant. Much of the report has been incorporated into a thesis by two group members - C.Post and A.Zwartjes, De Personeelswerker Op Zoek Naar Een Nieuwe Baan? Akademie De Horst, Driebergen, Apr.1977.

Finally, to gain a broader view of worker occupations - both historically and Europe-wide - I was fortunate enough to interview three participants in the American sit-down strikes of the 1930s, including Dave Millar - the President of the United Automobile Workers (UAW) retirees[1]. On the current situation in Europe I owe much to discussions with Dr.Teulings of Amsterdam University.

Summary.

This work, for various reasons, has come to rely heavily on existing documentation and reports, supplemented by written evidence - varying in type and quality - from fourteen respondants (of twelve occupations), by interviews and discussions with thirteen occupation leaders and union officials (from eight occupations) along with two journalists, by way of a study tour involving discussions with five worker- co-operative leaders and several shop floor workers (from three establishments), and finally by drawing from personal experience of political and trade union activity over the period. In all a range of material has been collected directly on twenty-three occupations and, largely through documentary sources, on a further two-hundred.

In each case several features were looked at: - i) size of factory by number employed, ii) number directly involved in the occupation, iii) unions involved in the occupation, iv) unions failing to involve themselves in the occupation, v) the political characteristics of leading shop stewards, vi) the nature of the industrial relations 'climate' in factories prior to occupation, vii) the expressed aim

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1. The interviews, financed by the Dutch study tour arrangements, were conducted in Detroit in November of 1976.

of the occupation, i.e., wages or redundancy issues, viii) the composition of the workforce involved, in terms of age, sex, skill, ix) the type of support received, if any, from trade unions at official level, x) the identity of persons or organisations held to have initiated the occupation, and xi) the extent of contact with other occupation workforces. In all of these categories information proved difficult to achieve to any great degree of uniformity or accuracy. In almost every case, however, important corroborative evidence was available and provided a general, albeit tenuous, guide to the developmental roots of worker occupations.

Theoretical Perspective.

This work attempts to analyse the development of worker occupations from a Marxist perspective. Recognising, however, the problems involved in such an approach the second chapter of this work discusses the arguements within Marxism relevant to the development of Marxist industrial relations theory.

This chapter argues that the explanation of the development of worker occupations cannot be sought through reference simply to events within a particular workplace. Marxist methodology assumes that the character of a given "social formation" is ultimately determined by the predominant "mode of production". Thus it is that this work seeks explanation by way of the form class struggle has developed and is manifest in Britain today.

The specific character of the work's Marxist approach includes a key focus upon ideological (left) leadership which,

it is argued, is essential to transform, develop and shape class conflict. Contradictions in the economic structure of capitalism form the basis of ideological strength and the extent of revolutionary leadership's potential influence. Indeed there seems to be a strong association between widespread socio-economic crisis and the prominance of revolutionary leadership. It is in such situations that worker occupations have occurred; reinforcing the arguement that they are both reflections of crisis and, in turn, radical contributions to that crisis.

An historical analysis of the advent of worker occupations (chapter 3) serves to reveal, more sharply, the association between worker occupations, widespread socio-economic crisis and ideologically left leadership.

The following chapters trace the forms of worker occupations that occurred in the first part of the 1970's (chapter 4), the specific character of the underlying economic crisis (chapters 5 and 7), and the nature of the leadership involved (chapters 6, 9, and 10).

It is argued that at a structural level some forms of of occupation contain more potential for the development of class consciousness. Redundancy occupations may have a better potential than those concerned with pay issues; redundancy reveals the contradictions of capitalism to the actor in a much more intensely personal way and is likely to be fought out over a lengthy period of time. Occupations of the 'full' workplace as opposed to a 'partial' take-over have greater consciousness raising potential; the clearer that some form of 'control' is

actually exercised, i.e., over an entire workplace, the clearer ideas of 'workers' control' can be conceived. These potentialities must, however, be treated with some caution; technological determination is not paramount - leadership makes a crucial difference to situations.

Leadership's abilities to transform consciousness will of course depend on the existance of objective material factors, and the nature of the industrial concentration of occupations is examined to confirm the arguement that the greatest potential is associated with the surplus value producing industries. By and large, there does appear to be a strong link between those industries and the concentration of revolutionary leadership and of occupations (chapter 4). Ultimately the occupations of the period 1971-75 need to be seen as being linked by a common network of socio-economic crisis factors and ideologically left leadership influences. Collectively they were part of a common phenomenon which was defined by the ideological left, employers, government and media alike as radically challenging and this context overshadowed any structural limitations any individual action might have had.

In chapter 5 the growing socio-economic crisis of the late 1960's/early 1970's in Britain is examined. Given that the country had experienced a number of crises throughout the post-war period, the chapter sets out to identify those features which are peculiar to the period leading up to the outbreak of occupations, and which appear to have a clear relevance to their

development. It is argued that from a number of standpoints Britain, at this time, experienced an economic crisis in many ways unparalleled since the depression of the 1930's.

Economic crisis alone is not explanation enough: after all, as in the period after the General Strike of 1926, this could have led to widespread retreat among trade unions rather than to an offensive. A major factor to be emphasised is the development from 1969 onward of a series of political strikes, unknown since the 1920s in Britain. It is argued that a trade union movement schooled in political strikes is more likely to engage in other forms of radical industrial action (i.e., occupations) or, at least, that such experience is probably a strongly associated factor. The fact that trade unionists actually resorted to the use of political strikes itself needs explanation: this is dealt with in chapters 5 and 6.

The first of these examines how successive governments, from the onset of the 1960s, have attempted to deal with the developing crisis and how, in the event, they have placed "industrial relations" into an overtly and directly political context. The point being that attempts to introduce and enact anti-trade union legislation have led to a situation where 'normal' trade union action was inadequate to resist such a threat. If trade union action were to be directed at preventing such laws then the action would need to be political

(aimed at defeating government enactments) and involve trade unionists from a range of unions.

Chapter Six takes up the question of the ability and willingness of sections of trade unionists to resist such laws; seeking to explain the source of this strength. The main offensive appears to have been initiated at 'grass roots' level - from shop floor and branch organisation. Thus the significance of organisation at this level is examined.

The significance of the "growth of the shop steward" is already well rehearsed[1]. What the chapter sets out to examine is the extent to which the growing power of the shop steward (and rank and file organisation) had created a political and experiential potential capable and ready to resist erosions of perceived rights and conditions.

It is argued that, unlike pre-war periods, there existed a large number of militant shop floor/rank and file union organisations which were much more ready and able to initiate radical action than the official union leadership schooled more in playing within the rules and regulations of the system of industrial relations. That is not to suggest a sharp dichotomy. It is argued, in fact, that the growth of the shop stewards' "movement is strongly associated with changes in certain, crucial, union leaderships and contributed

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1. Cf. V.L.Allen, 1966; T.Cliff and C.Barker, 1967; K.Coates and T.Topham, 1970.

to a situation where union officialdom responded to certain radical initiatives.

Thus, chapters five and six provide us with the following picture. An unparalleled economic crisis is increasingly dealt with by government resort to measures seeking legally to restrict trade union rights and to curtail wages. Such measures were directed at a trade union movement in which key elements of power had shifted towards shop floor organisation[1]. A trade union movement, nonetheless, characterised by a growth in the number of left-wingers among union officials and by a growth in union members and density to record levels.

An important manifestation of the whole situation of was witnessed in the advent of the political strikes from 1969 onwards, initiated primarily at shop floor level.

These factors are claimed to be crucial for an understanding of the background to the advent of workplace occupations. In essence these elements are seen as unique background factors in the creation of an economic and political climate in which new ideas could develop and new actions be embarked upon, but which did not develop in other critical periods of Britain's industrial history.

Chapter Seven deals with a specific element of the crisis, namely, the question of unemployment and redundancy. It seeks to answer the question of how specifically were aspects of the economic crisis felt by

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1. I am using the term throughout to indicate a number of rank and file or lay bodies, including branch organisation, trades councils, shop steward bodies and even district committees of certain unions - primarily the Engineering Union (AUEW).

sections of workers. Most of the early occupations concerned redundancy and closure. It therefore seems appropriate to examine this aspect and to assess the extent to which the threat of unemployment was itself perceived in a unique or changed way. The workers of Scotland, for instance, had long faced high levels of unemployment and yet, prior to the UCS occupation, had not previously taken such radical action. Why? The answer is by no means straightforward. In addition to the radicalising factors mentioned in the previous chapters some emphasis is given to the fact that the British working class had recently come through a period of rapid industrial mergers and rationalisation programmes involving large numbers of redundancies and closure, to reach the onset of a post-war record high in unemployment. This was particularly true for Scotland but no areas escaped the problem. To a generation of workers raised in the expectation of "full employment" (or what had passed for it) the situation must have seemed unusually grim. Information, or propaganda, about the "health" of British capitalism[1] changed from one of guarded optimism to over riding gloom. This situation provided two major possibilities for a strong workforce facing redundancy: an atmosphere of fear, as hope gave way to disaster both on a preceived personal and social level, or an atmosphere of anger. The reality in many cases was a mixture of both and the general situation of unemployment and economic despair was such as to make it likely that reactions would be uncommonly sharp. It is argued that the provision of redundancy payments and allied social benefits was insufficient to offset the fear and anger of workers being made redundant.

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1. The general feeling of depression may have seemed total to some people faced with the fact that economic depression was general throughout western industrial societies.

This being possibly due to the fact that such payments help to offset the fear of unemployment only so long as the recipient is able to perceive a short term unemployment experience. High and general unemployment decreases such a possibility.

Chapter 8 moves to an examination of particular aspects of given situations. Turning from the broader sociological backdrop it deals with the industrial relations climate prevailing in workplaces prior to occupation and in the period leading up to the action.

Several features appear to be common to a large number of occupations. Management handling of situations in certain cases appears to have served the purpose of tipping the workforce 'over the edge', i.e., that had the situation been handled less callously a less radical course of action may have been embarked upon. There is a strong association between occupations and both the existance of shop floor organisation and records of industrial militancy. Occupied factories tend to have an extensive record of industrial disputes and strikes which put them among the very few to experience such levels of unrest in that period. Additionally these factories are very largely among the largest (by numbers employed) and more powerful (by financial holding and turnover) companies in Britain[1]. A strong association is also revealed in regard to political strikes. Many of those involved in occupations were also involved in political strikes throughout the period. Thus it would appear from this that those shop floor organisations which grew strong and militant in the 1960s through to the early 1970s and were to the fore in the political strike situation, were largely the same organisations which initiated and supported workplace occupations.

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1. This adds weight to existing theories concerning organisational size (of companies and trade unions) which stress the importance of the increasing impersonalisation of workplace relations and the development of bureaucracy in industrial life. Cf. Lockwood (1958), Hughes (1973).

Chapter 9 deals with the critical question of leadership. It points out that the development of shop floor organisation was not simply spontaneous. That they grew in the face of fierce opposition from certain employers, union leaders and even government. In such situations leadership was required to co-ordinate the efforts of shop floor workers. An even greater need for leadership was evidenced in the opposition to legislation which threatened trade union rights. Co-ordinating the efforts of shop stewards from diverse unions at a single workplace has proven difficult. Co-ordinating workers across a range of industries and unions requires an even greater level of planning. In short, the question of leadership is a crucial one.

In this chapter the following questions are examined. What were the context and requirements of leadership needed to bring about shop floor organisation? Were these requirements needed for the initiation of, at least, the early pioneering occupations of 1971?

As a number of case studies of occupations got under way it soon became clear AUEW membership[1] involvement and leadership far outweighed that of any other union. That union has been involved in more occupations than any other union and in a majority of cases its shop stewards have played a leading role.

In seeking to explain the role of the AUEW in worker occupations the role of the shop steward in that union is examined, and in contrast with three other major trade unions. It is argued that an explanation

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1. Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers. For ease and brevity the Engineering Union will be refered to as the AUEW despite the fact that prior to 1971 its constituent parts included the A.E.U. (Amalgamated Engineering Union) and the D.A.T.A. (Draughtsmen and Allied Technicians Association).

lies in the fact that, given the context outlined earlier, a trade union which both encourages and reflects shopfloor opinion at all levels should be expected to have a membership more strongly organised at shop floor level, with established traditions and experience of influence and participation, and being better placed to respond to events. By (theoretical) contrast, a membership which has to go through long procedures of negotiation primarily conducted by full-time officials, and where national bodies have to ratify shop floor action, will be less able to occupy a factory than one which is used to taking quick decisions for itself.

Chapter **10** continues with an examination of leadership. In addition to the role played by the AUEW in occupations they were also to the fore in many of the political strikes of the period. This is also the case with ideologically left-wing shop stewards - many of whom are revealed as being members of both the AUEW and the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). In the latter case, members of that organisation played a key role in co-ordinating and initiating both the series of political strikes and the early pioneering occupations in 1971/early 1972.

Thus there arose the need to examine the role played by the Communist Party. This entailed some examination of that party and its role in British industrial relations - with regard to the post-war era. It is argued that the initiation of both political strikes and workplace occupations required an ideologically left-wing leadership and one which was embodied in the strength of the trade union movement - shop floor organisation in particular. More than any other left-wing organisation the C.P.G.B. filled that bill at that time[1]. The CPGB played the key role

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1. That is not to deny that other left-wing activists did not play important roles, but one must distinguish the CPGB's much wider and key role.

in almost all of the main actions of the period.

Faced with these indications, and similar evidence from the Railway Workshop study[1], the chapter goes on to examine the CPGB and assess how it has become an important influence in British industrial relations. In the course of this examination existing theories of the Communist Party are critically analysed as being either too inclined to underrate its importance or to distort its character.

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1. In this study the question of leadership, and communist leadership, appeared to be a vital factor in explaining the difference in approach between groups of railway trade unionists faced with redundancy.

The situation was that in the early 1960s three Darlington railway workshops were faced with closure; one privately owned ( English Electric) and two by British Rail. To a large extent the town relied heavily on railway employment. Yet English Electric and Faverdale were closed without a struggle. The North Road workers, on the other hand, waged a four year struggle which involved lobbies of M.P.s and Parliament, strikes, protest marches, and even the production of a feasability study.

A number of factors were sifted to assess why the difference in approach had occurred. All three workshops were roughly comparible in spread of age groups, and all consisted overwhelmingly of male workers. Size of workforce (i.e., numbers employed) did vary - with 350 at Faverdale, 950 at English Electric and 2,500 employed at North Road. This appears to be an important variable - but at what point? Should, for instance, the 950 be grouped with the 350 or the 2,500? Union involvement revealed a mixed pattern. Faverdale consisted mainly of NUR (National Union of Railwaymen) members, while English Electric was mainly AEU. At North Road there was a rough divide between NUR and AEU, but with the latter providing much of the leadership. The contrast between North Road and Faverdale lends some credence to the points made in chapter seven (see also Martin,1968 who contrasts the militancy of the AEU with the non-militancy of the NUR). The weakness in the case clearly lies with the inaction of the engineers at English Electric. The major difference, in which case, may lay with the fact that the North Road works contained a long established and active industrial branch of the CPGB and that the leading convener was an executive committee member of that party. This convener was the guiding force behind much of the struggle.

Chapter 11 examines the worker co-operatives which arose out of occupations[1]. If worker occupations implied a challenge to property rights and managerial control then the co-operatives seemed to go further; turning the implicit into reality. By that token they would seem to be greater advances in radical trade union action. Indeed, some people perceived the situation in this way. But were they? The chapter sets out to examine the nature of the worker co-operatives and deals with the following questions. How far are they economically viable? Does their economic situation undermine their expressed "co-operative principles"? To what extent do they pose any threat to capital - in their existance, their expressed aims, and the encouragement they give other workers to make greater demands for workers' control?

It is argued that, on balance, the worker co-operatives have presented a challenge to property rights. That the act of workers running and controlling workplaces in which they were formerly employees challenges an essential element of capitalist ideology - concerning questions of both ownership and control. It is pointed out that the extent (and endurance) of this challenge is limited by the economic situation in which they operate and by the limited nature of their initial objectives. The need to survive in a capitalist economy places certain constraints on the running of a co-operative and can compel a situation where co-operative management principles can be undermined; this is demonstrably the case at Triumph Meriden were eventually differentials were re-introduced and at Leadgate Engineering which re-opened

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1. At the time of embarking upon this study these forms of worker co-operative did not exist. Consequently until recently very little had been written about them. The situation is rapidly changing and a large number of articles and at least three books have been produced on the subject.

along capitalist lines. In no single case did the main thrust for establishing a workers' co-operative go much further than the desire to save jobs, i.e., economistic exceeded socialist ideals.

Chapter 12 summarises the thesis' overall discussion and attempts to analyse how effective the occupation tactic has been. It is argued that the tactic has in many ways proven to be superior to other forms of industrial action. In redundancy situations many jobs were saved that might have otherwise been lost. In wage issue situations the occupation provided a more effective way of picketing and engendered greater potential for workforce solidarity. It is pointed out that the tactic has proven to be of limited value over time; jobs have eventually been lost and wage increases eroded. In short, the occupation tactic has thus far failed to fulfil its more radical challenge; being limited to narrow objectives. At this latter level, however, it has proven superior to the strike in both its ability to achieve limited objectives and in raising generally working class consciousness.

The chapter ends by detailing certain events since 1975 and discusses what light they throw on the main arguement of the work in hand. It is argued that the thesis has succeeded in its prediction of the continued use of the occupation tactic. Large companies still predominate among occupied workplaces. Membership of the AUEW still figures sizeable among occupations, and to a lesser extent left-wing activists. On the other hand the CPGB has undergone the first serious split in its history, its main influence on shop floor organisation - The Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions - has become moribund, the leaders of the AUEW and the TGWU (Transport and General

Workers Union) moved steadily to the right, and virtually all the leading national positions in the AUEW were captured by the right. It is argued that while these reversals appear to throw doubt on some of the conclusions regarding leadership that the points are nonetheless valid. The CPGB did play a key (albeit, eventually weakening) role in the events of the period. The election of Scanlon (AUEW) and Jones (TGWU) was both a result of shop floor growing strength and a contribution - at that time - to its continued growth. That the AUEW is a union open to democratic change is demonstrated in the change of union officers. The blame for the reversals is laid at the door of changes within the leadership and philosophy of the CPGB. But by the same token as its successes were claimed to be limited by its size the same is true of its failings. It is conceeded that structural factors may be more crucial than might have been thought earlier.

Summary.

This work sets out to assess the extent to which workplace occupations can be said to be a social phenomenon with significance beyond individual workplace gates. It argues that the background features must be sought in the economic developments of the preceeding decade and developments within trade union organisation. Within this framework government attempts to deal with economic crises, which included anti-trade union legislation and compulsory wage freezes, are considered a vital contributory factor to the creation of political strikes and thus a climate in which worker occupations could develop.

Workplace related factors are also considered to be important contributory reasons. Redundancy is seen as an important feature both

at the individual workplace level and in broader social terms. Local industrial relations practice is singled out as playing an important role in generating dramatic reactions, and this is set in the context of the fact that many of those practices are linked to the fact that the companies involved are large, powerful, employers.

Given this whole scenario ideological leadership is seen as a compelling area for examination with particular regard to the role of the CPGB.

Finally, the question of worker co-operatives is singled out for consideration given the special questions which they raise. They are assessed to have made a radical (albeit, limited) contribution to industrial relations in Britain.

In concluding it is assessed that the occupation will continue to be used as a tactic , indeed is continued to be so. That several of the features of leadership have been reversed is conceeded but it is felt that the central points remain firm.

Occupations. Significance and Definition.

It has been argued elsewhere[1] that there is a need to develop a generic term which encompasses the industrial action under review. There is already a proliferation of terms; "sit-ins", "work-ins", "sit-down strikes", etc. I have chosen to use the word "occupation" throughout this work. The term has its drawbacks but has the advantage of conceptualizing the nature of the activity without narrowing down the way it is engaged in.

Beyond these initial terms confusion has been added in the form of sub-divisions. Keyser and Hemingway (1976), for instance, speak of "industrial relations sit-ins" and "redundancy sit-ins", while Chadwick (1972) refers to "defensive" and "offensive" sit-ins. Keyser and

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1. Mills, 1976b.

Hemingway also subdivide "redundancy sit-ins" into "defensive" and "assertive" sit-ins[1].

In both studies the categories direct attention to the aims of the occupation workforce and somehow deflect it away from the very nature and thus importance of the occupation tactic.

"Both, unnecessarily, go beyond the basic point that occupations are, by their very nature, radical forms of industrial action: apart from, in many cases, being a more effective form of industrial action, occupations more than any other type of industrial action raise - both explicitly and implicitly - wider questions of industrial democracy through their fundamental challenging of managerial, and in some cases even Governmental, decision-making. Thus, unlike strike action whose major constituent is the withdrawal of labour involved, the occupation's main element lies in a measure of control being exercised by the workforce over at least part of the plant and machinery of the company involved. In effect all occupations need to be viewed not . . . from the position of the desired aim, but from the way the nature of the action contains a much more significant challenge to the existing structure of industrial relations. From this position all occupations are either assertive or offensive", (2).

The discussion above assumes that occupations are a definate and definable entity, distinguishable by the fact that the main element lies in "a measure of control being exercised by the workforce over at least part of the plant and machinery of the company involved". To a considerable extent this must be the intent of the action, although it need not be consciously so in the initial stages. For example, the first occupation at Briant Colour Printing works (April,1971)[3] began almost as a "blind reaction" to events. The workers were told that there was to be a large

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1. The concepts are not used in the same way however.

   "Chadwick would seem to be making a . . . distinction between those occupations aimed at defending the jobs of those involved, and those aimed at forcing improvements in wages (and other conditions)".

   On the other hand, Keyser and Hemingway's division is between,

   ". . . those which merely have the desired aim of retaining jobs but under the same management, (and) those aiming to establish a totally new employment situation such as workers' co-operatives".

   Mills, 1976b.

2. Ibid.

3. Where individual occupations are refered to the date of origin is given in the brackets.

number of redundancies and they responded immediately by throwing management out and occupying the factory. Only after this did they take a conscious decision to remain in occupation until their demands had been met. The initial response was not aimed at exercising some form of control over plant and machinery although very quickly intent matched the effective situation. The point here is to distinguish them from actions such as "downers" in the car industry, many of which are effectively intended as short protest strikes. Workers remain on strike within the factory because it is not worth the time and effort of leaving the job for what is intended as an hour or so's protest.

Thus, this study sets out to examine those actions which involve some intent to exercise control over plant and machinery through a process of physically remaining within a workplace area to prevent management (and their agents) gaining access. The occupation also includes the aim of using the tactic as a bargaining weapon to achieve certain ends. Excluded from the categorisation are those actions which simply have the intention of making a short protest. The point is to delineate those actions which raise issues of managerial control and are in effect fundamentally new bargaining weapons, from those actions which have more in common with traditional protest actions and which are not fundamentally challenging in the issues they raise.

The whole issue of the significance of the occupation tactic as a "radical" departure from existing trade union action is contentious. It is not claimed, however, that occupations were embarked upon with the aim of bringing about social change; at least, not directly. Nor is it argued that such actions were designed to wrest ultimate control of the

workplace from the owners. It is claimed that in many cases political intent was involved, with leading shop stewards seeing the action as a more effective way of raising the level of "class struggle" generally.

It is further claimed that such actions are evidence of a change in consciousness among some sections of workers. The traditional strike weapon need not involve any direct challenge to managerial prerogative. Strikes have been used to challenge management decisions on a whole number of issues, but where this has been the case the action has not - in the withdrawal of labour - been able to raise the point as sharply as an occupation could have done. Besides, a great number of strikes in essence only challenge the price of the labour contract and to that extent accept managerial authority. Strikes remove managerial control over labour but in the case of occupations control over all or part of the productive process is more clearly prevented. Thus, in the occupation tactic there is involved (at least implicitly) much more of a willingness of the workforce to challenge managerial authority.

Occupations all have in common a willingness of workers to prevent the employer from exercising control over a particular industrial process. In many cases this has led to a sharper expression by workers of their "rights in a job"; their right to be in a certain workplace and to have a say over the control of that job.

Finally, it is not the claim of this study that occupations are challenges of a fundamentally new type but that they are greater extensions of the type of challenge contained within the more traditional industrial action methods. Strikes raise the issue, in various ways, of the fundamental problem of the ownership of the means of production. Occupations raise the issue in a more direct and effective fashion.

CHAPTER 2

MARXISM AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS.

"Without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement", (J.V.Stalin).

Introduction.

In this chapter I want to make explicit the underlying theory of the work as a whole and, in so doing, I want to reveal the various problems involved in attempting a Marxist approach to the study of 'industrial relations'.

I will argue that the theoretical basis of this work is Marxist. It is so because it adopts a methodological approach which assumes that the character of a given "social formation" is ultimately determined by the predominant "mode of production"[1]. The approach begins with the premise that in order to understand vital social structures, events and developments we need to relate them ultimately to the class structure of society; beginning at the level of economic production. Thus, for example, I have sought to explain the development of worker occupations not by refering simply to events within a particular workplace[2] but through reference to economic and political crises within Britain generally.

Using this approach I have laid emphasis on the question of leadership (in the context of economic crisis). Contrary to some other Marxist accounts, I want to argue that leadership

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1. I have stated this in its simplest form but will attempt to reveal the problems of such an approach throughout this chapter.

2. Although these factors are certainly taken into account - see Chapter 8 for example.

has an importance which may, in various respects, outweigh economic factors of structural conflict and crisis. Leadership is the crucial factor which translates conflict into consciousness.

If this is so, I will argue, the interpretive aspect of class consciousness provides us with a certain set of expectations. It means that class consciousness can be partial and temporary for many. To that extent widespread economic and political unrest need not rely upon high levels of class consciousness among large numbers of workers. Nor need we expect such situations to automatically lead to revolutionary consciousness, nor to lasting levels of class consciousness. That will depend upon a number of factors including the relative severity of the socio-economic crisis, the relative strengths of competing ideologies and the strength and abilities of existing revolutionary organisations.

I will argue that the importance of idiologically left leadership demands that adequate account be made of the CPGB in the development and spread of workplace occupations[1].

I will also argue that the historic development of Marxist ideology, parties and states can have an important influence upon events so that a revolutionary party's influence need not always be direct and immediate. Thus, the CPGB's role in regard to political strikes had an importance influence on later developments - i.e., occupations.

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1. See also Introductory and 10th Chapters.

In making my arguement I want to show the difficulties involved in attempting a Marxist theory of industrial relations. Marxists have been more successful in criticism of orthodox theories of industrial relations than in developing a Marxist alternative. This has happened because key concepts have been presented in a way which fails to reveal their problematic nature.

Failure to deal with the crucial Marxist debate about the epistemology and consequent methodology of Marxism[1] has allowed the critics to chose their ground and make some very telling attacks. R.K.Brown, for example, has faulted certain Marxist accounts of industrial relations by pointing to the failure of the widespread economic crisis of the 1970's to give rise to any significant development of class consciousness[2].

The criticism is telling because Brown can choose - rightly - those aspects of Marxism he considers fair game and attribute them to any analysis laying claim to that title of Marxist. Some Marxist accounts do believe in the historical inevitability of socialism. Some Marxist accounts stress a rigid link between what they call "base" and "superstructure" and expect conflict to be correctly reflected in the form of consciousness. By failing to discuss their own position on such questions those Marxists have opened themselves up to being being tarred with the same ideological inconsistencies to a position they may not wish to defend. Clarity of position may not defend the Marxist from attack but it allows her/him to choose the ground to fight on!

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1. I recognise the necessity for keeping the original pioneering Marxist works in the field of industrial relations largely confined to an attack upon orthodox theories.

2. R.K.Brown, 1978.

What kind of Marxism?

It has been pointed out by Marxists within the field of industrial relations that,

"There are different facets to Marx's contribution and there are many interpretations of it . . .", (1).

And that,

"There is no simple and clear cut 'Marxist theory of industrial relations' ", (2).

This has not, however, prevented those same authors from proceeding as if there was a unitary body of Marxist thought.

Since the late 1950s there has been a developing and widespread rift within Marxist circles; culminating in a shaking of the epistemological foundation stones of Marxism. The nature of these divisions has a very important bearing upon industrial relations and should not be simply brushed aside by references to their existance.

For almost a century the major arguements within Marxism had been within the same 'problematic'[3]. The classic Social Democrats[4], for instance, seemed to have had more (epistemologically) in common with the emerging Communist activists[5] than the later "humanist" tradition of Lukacs, Lewis and Thompson. Both Social Democrats and Communists seemed to more or less accept a structuralist interpretation of social development; with the former believing that structural modifications could lead to change while the latter believed that the structural conflicts would lead to revolutionary change.

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1. V.L.Allen, 1971, p.viii.
2. R.Hyman, 1975, p.6
3. See L.Althusser, 1971 for a definition of "problematic".
4. E.Bernstein and K.Kautsky for instance.
5. Lenin and Luxemburg for instance.

The other early divide out of the Marxist tradition - the Trotsky-Stalin battle - also shared common epistemological ground (albeit with a different epistemological emphasis)[1].

In the meantime the 'Frankfurt School' was developing an alternative interpretation of the epistemological base of Marxism but this was to remain, for some decades, very much on the periphery of consideration within Marxist circles[2].

Things slowly and then rapidly began to change. In 1933 Marx's 'Economic and Philisophical Manuscripts of 1844' was published for the first time and ultimately allowed scope for Lukacs' work to be seen as a valid Marxist interpretation[3]. Even then there was no significant opening up of debate around the issues raised. It took the defeat of fascism, the death of Stalin, the Soviet "intervention" in Hungary ('56) and the Khrushchev speech at the CPSU's 20th Congress the same year to clear the way for such a debate.

In brief a 'New Left' developed from splits in various Communist Parties following events in 1956. This was accelerated after the Warsaw Pact "intervention" in Czechoslovakia in 1968. For many Marxists - including some allied to Trotsyism - the concept of "alienation" came to symbolise the essence of Marxism and gave rise to an implicit, and often explicit, critique of the predominant structuralist approach.

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1. In essence the debate turned around the question of the vanguard role of the working class and the nature of class alliance. See L.Michail, 1977.

2. Lukac's 'History and Class Consciousness', for example, did not gain significant prominance until the late 1960s.

3. Cf.D.McLellan, 1980.

It is perhaps ironic that it took a structuralist to crystallize the process into a full blown debate. Towards the end of the 1960s/early 1970s the work of Louis Althusser[1] became the beacon light for those wishing to re-establish the supremacy of the structuralist interpretation of Marxism.

Structuralism or Humanism?

Briefly, Althusser claims that an "epistemological break" can be discerned in the work of Marx; seen at its sharpest in the contrast between the 'Economic and Philisophical Manuscripts' (EPM) and the later 'Capital' (1865). The earlier work, with its emphasis upon "alienation", is basically - for Althusser - teleological and unscientific; talking in terms of "human essence" as a motivational factor for opposition to social structures - of which, capitalism is the latest version. The later work, with its emphasis upon "exploitation", is basically scientific; explaining motivation for change as being rooted in structural contradictions within capitalism - contradictions which have a persuasive influence upon human action[2].

I would argue[3] that a "scientific" approach to industrial relations must lie with an analysis that seeks explanation and prediction of human behaviour within social structures. That human action is explanable in terms of the myriad of human interactions - both current and historical, as

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1. Cf. L.Althusser, 1970, 71, 72, and 76.

2. For a fuller discussion of the nature of this debate see P.Anderson, 1980; J.Lewis, 1972; and L.Althusser, 1970.

3. A discussion on the possibility of an "epistemological break" (Althusser, 1970), an "evolutionary development" (J.Lewis, 1972) or a "logical coherence" (J.Larrain, 1979) is beyond the scope of this work.

opposed to accounts which imply that human motivation is rooted in factors which transcend human experience[1]. For example, some accounts imply that each and every worker has a revolutionary "soul" just waiting to be given direction. This kind of analysis was implicit in the International Socialism Group's reporting of events at UCS[2].

A structuralist Marxist approach to industrial relations.

I would argue that a structuralist approach is the basis of a scientific approach but it is not without its controversy. I would say, for the sake of simplicity, that an important starting point is what has problematically been called the 'economic base'.

In 'Capital' Marx directs our attention to the nature of commodity production. In brief this involves production for sale on the market (rather than for direct use and consumption). Market conditions present the capitalist with uncertainty and competition. Each individual capitalist needs to sell his/her commodities but does not know the actual demand nor whether his/her products will be preferred to the identical products of competitors. Ideally the most successful capitalist will be the one whose price is the lowest; the least successful being the one whose price is highest.

Fundamentally price will ultimately depend upon use of labour time. Across a comparable industry there will be an

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1. I am using the concept "scientific" in its broadest, and aspirational sense.

2. See 'SOCIALIST WORKER' issues July 1971 to August 1972.

average time that the workers take to "reproduce themselves materially". That is, the time it takes to earn their wages as opposed to providing "surplus labour" out of which "surplus value" can potentiallly be transformed into, or realised as, profit[1]. Those enterprises working above the average time for "socially necessary labour" will be harder put to sell their products, while those at the average time will be relatively disadvantaged to those producing in a fast, below the average, time. In short, there is a compulsion upon capitalists to improve upon their production time. This can and has been achieved in several ways. The capitalist can improve his/her forces of production, i.e., can introduce more efficient machinery and/or take a number of actions designed to achieve a different ratio between worker effort and wages. The latter can involve wage reductions, higher productivity without a comensurate increase in wages, and redundancies.

Here we have a vital structural contradiction which involves the capitalist in a drive to accumulate wealth[2] and leads to increasing pressure upon the workers[3]. At one very fundamental level we have here a contradiction inherent within

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1. I would refer the reader to E.Mandel, 1978 as the basis of the approach taken here.

2. Cf. Mandel, op cit.

3. It has been argued that this process is intensified through an increasing capitalist need for expenditure on technology which increases the ratio of outlay on this and labour to surplus value achieved. Thus, creating a tendency for the rate of profit to fall. See Mandel, '78 and 'Capital' Vol. III, 1962.

capitalism which holds out the potential for conflict. V.L.Allen (1971) explains it thus,

"On the one hand the sellers of labour power enters the labour market in order to subsist so that the price of labour power is a vital subsistence matter for them, while on the other hand the buyers enter the market because they own the means of production and have insufficient labour power to make production possible so that the price is an important cost factor which has to be minimized in order to make production possible. These two interests are irreconcilable", (1).

This process has provided Marxists with the basis for explanation of class conflict, class consciousness and the development of trade unionism[2] but, as we shall see, this needs to be treated with the utmost caution. At best it provides an explanation of the potential for group interests to emerge among production workers. It does not explain how the process is transformed into trade union or class consciousness nor whether such consciousness need remain 'developed' outside of, or following, a conflict situation. Nor does it explain the how or why of trade unionism and conflict consciousness among non-production workers, especially those within non-capitalist enterprises.

Marx goes on to explain in 'Capital' how the capitalist mode of production provides the basis for far-reaching conflict[3]. At a number of points there is a potential for conflict which cuts across an industry and across industries providing a potential for a greater development of group interests based on a broader constituency. At one level this is due to the fact that as

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1. p.39.

2. V.L.Allen, 1971, argues that "the necessary condition for trade unionism is selling labour power so that all employees are potential trade unionists . . . irrespective of the occupation, income, social background or any other characteristics of employees", (p.43).

3. I do not intend to repeat the arguement but detail some of the salient points and relevant implications.

conflict occurs in various enterprises over various time spans workers have the potential of perceiving that other workers share a similar process of conflict - with all the various implications that go with it. Unemployment provides another potential identification point; showing workers that a particular fate is the potential of workers across industries. This potential is logically increased with increased levels of unemployment. At a different level the periodic crises of capitalism[1] actually place a large number of workers across the economy in a similar situation and thus increase the potential for group identification. Mass unemployment has been mentioned as one important occurrance. But we have the problem of how is such a potential translated into practice? It should be said that this level of analysis concerning the potential for consciousness and conflict is more tenuous than that referred to in connection with the individual capitalist enterprise.

Capitalism, thus, is a process which involves the "expropriation of surplus labour from the worker". This involves an increasing "rate of exploitation" as the capitalist, caught in a web of market uncertainty and competition, is forced to gain as much out of the workers as possible and for as little as possible. It is a process which periodically leads to crisis and which involves an intensification of the rate of exploitation and a large increase in unemployment. It is a process which faces the worker with wage reductions, increased "exploitation", threatened or actual unemployment and relative poverty in the face of

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1. Cf. E.Mandel, 1978; P.Jalée, 1977; and K.Marx 'Capital' Vol. III op cit.

an abundance of wealth. These are the structural factors which form the basis of class conflict, class consciousness, trade unionism and revolution. On their own, however, they raise too many questions.

Thus we need to look at non-economic factors of explanation as well. Again Allen ('71) has expressed this succinctly,

> "The consequences of the inbalance of power in the market are not confined to the work situation. The ownership of the means of production provides the base for economic and political power in a society. Where ownership rests in a few private hands then the power is used to perpetuate the system of distribution which supports this state. The availability of opportunity, the distribution of rewards, the allocation of status and privileges and the dominant supporting ideology all reflect the basic power position and serve to preserve it", (1).

While this analysis represents a fairly dominant view of Marxism it is inadequate in that it is presented unproblematically; it skirts over the fact that it reflects a one-sided view of the so-called 'base-superstructure' debate. As such it allows the critics of Marxist theory to raise a number of important objections to Marxist analysis of contemporary industrial relations[2].

Discussion about the initial maintenance and ultimate demise of capital rests, in the Marxian problematic, upon the inter-related concepts of class consciousness, ideology and revolutionary leadership.

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1. p.40.

2. M.Mann, 1973, for example, has produced an attack upon the Marxist use of consciousness which has, as yet, not been adequately countered.

Ideology.

Regrettably two key areas of analysis were never completed by Marx - class and ideology[1]. A discussion of the latter is far from simple: at least four versions of ideology are discernable from the works of Marx[2]. For instance, ideology can be equated with consciousness of reality as perceived; that is, that it accords with what is basically referred to as 'knowledge'.

Or, ideology can be equated with distorted reality; that is, that consciousness is a reflection of a reality which nonetheless masks the real nature of the social condition.

Or, ideology can refer to the deliberate distortion of reality. The difference between this and the last mentioned version can be seen in the following example: the statements of Ted Heath as Prime Minister might be seen as a reflection of the partial (and thus distorted) view of reality as he sees it, or as a deliberate attempt to present a view of reality that he knows not to be true but which serves to support the aims of his class.

Or, ideology can be taken to mean a true understanding of the nature of the social condition; glimpsable through class consciousness but not yet fully appreciated until a situation of communism has been achieved. In contrast to the first version

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1. 'Capital' ended at the point where Marx was about to begin an analysis of class and, according to J.Larrain '79, a work on ideology was planned to follow 'Capital'.

2. Cf. Larrain, op cit, and also M.Seligen '79 who discusses the varying forms of ideology in the work of Marx and later Marxists.

this is the difference between perception of the social condition as it is (or potentially is) versus that which it is in essence. This latter version is somewhat metaphysical and is more associated with the 'early Marx' and the work of Lukacs. As such it is unscientific - not being discoverable within the experience of human interaction. A more adequate account of ideology must be one which demonstratably has its foundation in the material construction of social life and which demonstrates the problematic nature of knowledge.

In the 'German Ideology' Marx argues that ideas - which later cohere into ideology - have their historical roots in man's drive for material reproduction. It is a process involving action for the satisfaction of human needs. Over time ideas have developed which reflect this process - but not adequately. Man's ideas of reality have been distorted to the extent that only a partial understanding of the dynamic of social life could be grasped.

This analysis provides a useful way of understanding the relationship of ideas as a product of social action based upon material needs. It is also useful for understanding the likely development of ideas about the nature of the human condition. Where doubt creeps in is over the question of the social dynamic.

We can, for example, provide an understanding of how the 'feudal mode of production' gave way to the capitalist mode

but what we cannot claim is that the process was inevitable. For example, to take one approach, we might pinpoint technological revolution as a primary factor of social change but we cannot claim that the invention of the spinning jenny or the steam engine was inevitable nor that their potential use was such as to have had inevitable results. In short, it would seem only possible for post-feudal man to understand the social dynamic of feudalism. Put that way it makes nonesense of the concept of distorted consciousness: it wasn't that some people failed to understand the 'true' dynamic but rather that some people provided a powerful interpretation of that dynamic that, combined with actual events, helped to create social change.

Marx also developed the concept that ideas can give rise to other ideas. This can be seen in his discussion of the modern "state"[1]. He argues that those in the more powerful economic positions are also, in consequence, better placed to achieve the predominance of their ideas of social reality. This "ruling ideology" in turn has a determinant influence upon the consciousness of those in subordinate positions. Ideas, thus, are not a simple reflection of social reality. They are likely a combination of interpretations and reflections; partially accurate, partially distorted. Ideology then can be seen as the continuous development of a view of social reality which involves a process of the human actor interacting with, and through, a network of social relations guided by an existing network of ideas.

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1. Cf. V.I.Lenin, 1947 and K.Marx, 1936.

Ideology and Social Reality.

What constitutes 'social reality'? What aspect of the whole is the most vital element and, indeed, is it relevant to select out elements?

Marxists would point out that due to the inherent contradictions within capitalism there is a discernable dynamic for social change. That this is a key element of social reality upon which several other aspects are dependant. That it is an element which is, nonetheless, not readily amenable to the consciousness of people due to the distorting processes abroad in the production of ideas - in particular the influence of the ideas of the ruling class.

Here we have a controversy which is central to my arguement. Namely, while we can show that the structure of capitalism holds out the potential for conflict we cannot show that its occurrance (if indeed we can even show that) will inevitably go in a certain direction. We could only do so by reference to an 'objective' knowledge of 'the laws of history' - which Michael Mann has effectively dismissed as "supra-empiri-cal"[1]. The implications of this arguement are that at best certain elements of social reality - structural tendency to conflict - are not adequately reflected in prominant views of social reality but it is not possible to refer to this situation as a distortion of the true nature of social reality.

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1. 1973, p.399. He adds that, "Such a position is beyond arguement - either one has faith or one has not".

It may well be that a concept of "class consciousness" which does not rely on supra-empirical references is one which views it as composed of a combination of reflection and interpretation. From this position we might deem as evidence of "class consciousness" that which is partially a reflection of existing factors of social reality and partially an acceptance of a Marxist interpretation of what is important in that social reality.

Class Consciousness.

The concept of "class consciousness" is central to the Marxist analysis of social change and yet there has been no adequate account of it.

Two of the best attempts to summarise the Marxist debate around this theme date back to the early 1970s: the Marxist work of H.Wolpe (1970) and that of the neo-Weberian M.Mann (1973). Regrettably both accounts end with conclusory remarks which place the debate back in the rather polarised ground that both had set out to overcome.

Wolpe points out that,

"there has been relatively little progress towards the elaboration of a theory concerning the development of the subjective conditions of revolutionary situations".

Analysing the work of various Marxists[1] he is able to show that many of the contributions are partial - with some resting on a "technologically determinist" arguement[2] and others neglecting structural constraints[3]. The problem with Wolpe's analysis,

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1. Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg, Trotsky, Mallet, Nairn, Marcuse, Debray and Gramsci.

2. i.e., theories of 'the new working class'.

3. i.e., the theory of Regis Debray.

however, is that he assumes that an adequate explanation requires that,

"the conditions or processes which are separately discussed by each writer be brought together and incorporated into an analysis which simultaneously takes account of them all".

But what if, as Mann so effectively argues, all of them suffer from a fundamental error? A key problem is that Wolpe's analysis seems to imply that class or "revolutionary consciousness" is akin to discovery of social truth; approximating to the last version of ideology mentioned above. As I have argued, this is ultimately a somewhat metaphysical approach.

The problem with Mann's analysis is of a different order. Its strength lies in showing that the Marxist concept of class consciousness has been dogged by idealist elements. To make the point Mann quotes Marx,

"It is not a question of what this or that proletarian or even the whole proletariate momentarily IMAGINES to be the aim. It is a question of what the proletariat is and what it consequently is historically compelled to do", (1).

This, says Mann, asserts,

". . . an 'objective' knowledge of the laws of history which is supra-empirical. Such a position is beyond arguement - either one has faith or one has not", (2).

Having thrown doubt upon the concept Mann concludes that,

"It seems rather unlikely that the proletariat carries in itself the power to be a class for itself", (3)

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1. p.45.
2. Ibid.
3. p.73.

Thus, for Mann, the Western working classes are not capable, or increasingly incapable, of being won to revolutionary action. Indeed he states that,

"In the modern West the major possibilities seem to be either a comparable process of assimilation between 'capitalists', 'managers' and 'technocrats', or a coup d'etat carried out during a period of social confusion in the name of the proletariat (or - and this may be more likely - a fascist coup to forestall the latter eventuality)", (1).

I would argue that it is one thing to claim that class consciousness and/or revolutionary action are not the inevitable results of capitalist social structure, quite another thing to say that such things are not possible. Much of Mann's problem in this latter regard is an over reliance upon static questionnaire/survey based research - i.e., of Blauner, Kornhauser, Goldthorpe et al - in which statements of 'what is' are translated as statements of 'what will be'.

So what is the potential for the realization of mass revolutionary action (and/or consciousness)? For much of this century anti-Marxists have been able to throw doubt upon the Marxist theory of class conflict by pointing to a number of incoherent social factors. For instance, the fact that in crisis torn developed capitalist social formations the working class have failed to resort to revolutionary action; indeed they have often supported non- and even counter-revolutionary action. Where revolutions have occurred they have been in social formations which directly lacked a predominant and developed

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1. p.73.

capitalist mode of production, e.g., Russia(1917), China(1949), and Cuba(1959).

Indeed some Marxists have themselves despaired of the proletariate (albeit, not of "revolutionary consciousness") and have looked to other social groups to initiate revolutionary action; peasants and lumpen-proletariate[1], students[2], blacks[3] and the administrative, professional and technical employees[4]. Even Lenin (1960) felt that the role of the professional revolutionary had to be emphasised because 'left to themselves the proletariat can only at best develop trade union consciousness'.

Yet "class consciousness" as a phenomena cannot be denied; that it is not a representation of an eternal truth does not eradicate the fact of its existance. This fact at least has been recognised even if its existance and that of class conflict have been under-estimated in regard to their continuing and pervasive role in social development.

Dahrendorf(1969), for example, has stated that Marx,

". . . did discover the formative force of conflicting social groups or classes", (5).

And that,

". . . the existance of class conflict is indubitable", (6).

He goes on, however, to claim that the manifestations of class

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1. Cf. F.Fanon, 1965
2. Cf. H.Marcuse, 1964; T.Nairn, 1968.
3. Cf. S.Carmichael & C.V.Hamilton, 1969.
4. Cf. S.Mallet, 1963.
5. p.125
6. p.267

conflict have changed:

"Increasingly, the social relations of industry, including industrial conflict, do not dominate the whole of society but remain confined in their patterns and problems to the sphere of industry. Industry and industrial conflict are, in post-capitalist society, institutionally isolated, i.e., confined within the borders of their proper realm and robbed of their influence on other spheres of society", (1).

Perhaps Dahrendorf might be excused this rather optimistic (!) approach given the consensus political era in which it was written[2]. Nonetheless, it does suffer from the very criticism that he levelled at Marx when he states that,

". . . the revolutionary tradition of the eighteenth century not only inspired Marx but misled him as well".

How much did the short period of socio-economic stability of the post-war era equally inspire and mislead Dahrendorf! As I have discussed in Chapters three and four class has had a widespread political relevance in Britain from the late 1960s.

Michael Mann has not the excuse of being isolated in that same era of socio-economic stability; far from it. Mann was writing after the events of May '68 in France and during a period of widespread industrial unrest in Britain. Yet, despite this he attempts to assign the real vitality of class and class conflict to the early stages of capitalist development. This leaves him with a problem when he finally comes to consider the period from the late 1960s. What is significant is both what he says and what he fails to say.

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1. p.268.

2. In fairness there are those in the Marxian tradition that have not yet adequately taken up the implications of those social conditions on their theoretical perspective.

For instance, he takes up the strike at Vauxhall motors, Luton in 1966. The strike is significant in the literature of industrial sociology. Blackburn (1967) was able to point to it as evidence of the inadequacy of the techniques of Goldthorpe et al's 'Affluent Worker Studies' (1968). Pointing to the strike itself and certain features of it[1] Blackburn was able to argue that attitudes are not fixed but are bound up with the flux and instablity of industrial capital. Thus, the Affluent Worker researchers were incorrect in their claims of "instrumental" and "privatised" worker attitudes which they recorded by way of surveys taken in a given time frame. Mann, while throwing doubt on Blackburn's wider arguement fails to deal with the specific criticism. Indeed, he points out that,

> "Subsequent industrial relations in the firm have been normal with long periods of calm interspersed with small-scale and short-lived strikes", (2).

Certainly an indication that radical fervour may be short-lived but not evidence of the declining important of industrial conflict.

His assessment of the May '68 strike movement in France is even more telling. He admits to the existance of a substantial degree of "revolutionary consciousness" among the participants[3] and to its continuing presence in the following years[4].

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1. Blackburn refers to "near riot conditions" and to strikers singing the Red Flag and other such examples.

2. 1973, P.48.

3. Ibid, pp.52-53.

4. Ibid, pp.53-54. He even conceeds that, "The occupations, and democratic worker committees, have also been an increasing feature of Italian industrial relations since Italy's 'long Hot summer' of 1968".

His critique fails at every point to deny the existance of "revolutionary consciousness" and so much so that it is forced to focus upon the inability of the Left to transform that consciousness into revolutionary action - and that is a different question all together.

Curiously Mann has nothing to say about the massively supported political strikes and worker occupations in Britain.

Thus, we have two competing intellectual traditions which recognise the existance of class, class consciousness and class conflict. One (Marxist) is able to predict the continued and growing significance of this phenomenon but often by reliance upon reference to supra-empirical explanations which transcend their materialist theoretical basis. The other (neo-Weberian) is able to provide a substantial critique of those supra-empirical explanations but an inadequate explanation of the vitality of class and its revolutionary potential. In short, Marxists can point to the vitality of class without adequately explaining its continuance while Weberians can adequately discount explanations about the continuance of the vitality of class without being able to adequately discount its existance.

There is no easy, empirically testable, answer. One can provide evidence of the existance of class consciousness and its association with widespread political and industrial unrest in much of Western Europe since the late 1960s. It is possible that, in an unintended way, writers from Dahrendorf to Mann have hit upon an important factor of explanation. As they say, the

early stages of capitalism did lead to significant expressions of class conflict. These expressions did indeed inspire Marx. But they did more than that. They inspired him to carry out a vast research project which itself had an important impact in the realm of ideology. Karl Marx's theoretical perspective was a reflection upon the material basis of social reality and its likely crucial effects. But it was something more. It provided a convincing interpretation of 'reality' and in a way which masked the fact that it was, in important essentials, an interpretation.

I am arguing that while capitalism provides the material basis for class conflict its structure does not do so inevitably - least ways not to any widespread extent. There has to be an intervening factor: class consciousness is not simply there to be discovered as an eternal truth; in part it has to be suggested and defined to workers. The theory and active political intervention of Marx (and Engels) likely provided the required intervention between reality and interpretation.

The early Marxists seem to have provided both a powerful ideology and the necessary leadership to make it a convincing ideology. The very fact that Marxism could seemingly "scientifically" point quite accurately to an important area of social process gave credence to its claims that this was also a predictor of social change. This factor possibly explains how class consciousness has continued to develop out of structural conflict - the intervention of revolutionary thinkers.

The continuance of capitalism is likely the best explanation of the continuance and development of Marxism which in turn helps to explain the continuance of class conflict[1].

Within Marx's lifetime a mass party claiming allegiance to Marxism came into being in Germany - actively carrying forward to greater numbers the new theory of historic class destiny. This party was to have an important influence among a relatively large number of people throughout Europe - including Tsarist Russia. Here possibly we have an added causal explanation of the October 1917 Russian Revolution; evidence of the power of ideology as an influencing factor where the specific material basis is inadequately developed[2]. The size (and influence) of the Bolshevik Party seems somewhat larger than what might have been expected given the relatively underdeveloped nature of the capitalist mode of production: explanation possibly lies, in part, in the fact that there had been a history of Marxist intervention in European affairs for the preceeding half century.

The impact of the Russian Revolution stimulated the establishment and growth of Marxist (Communist) parties throughout the world. In turn these parties have helped to further social conflict and have been on hand to provide interpretation of the cause and direction of structural conflict.

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1. Of course I am aware that some class focussed consciousness existed prior to Marx. I would argue, however, that the depth of Marx's insights may have strengthened and developed this trend.

2. I am not rejecting Lenin's thesis (1947) of "uneven development" but would argue that alone it is an insufficient explanation.

The Russian Revolution likely changed the potential development of class conflict in two key ways; materially and ideologically. With the establishment of the Soviet Union it was no longer possible to operate with a simple model of a capitalist mode of production to assess the potential for class conflict and revolutionary change. In that model the potential to prevent conflict from going in a certain direction relied on the fact that the predominant ideology rested with the economically powerful. With the existance of a powerful non-capitalist social formation, led by a ruling group with a Marxist ideology, and lending material and inspirational support to a word-wide Communist International we have a vital alternative ideological force to take into consideration. It is thus possible to conceive that factors other than the direct material basis (i.e., a developed capitalist mode of production) of a particular social formation can have a vital - if not key - influence upon the development of class conflict. For example, since the Russian Revolution Marxist led revolutions have occurred in material conditions even less favourable than that faced by the Bolsheviks: several largely peasant-based parties have staged revolutions in the name of the proletariat and peasantry. In the 1970s several Afrian nations began to attempt to build socialist social formations upon pre-capitalist foundations - Ethiopia, in particular, has begun with a near-feudalist mode of production[1].

Thus, the development of class consciousness may be

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1. See R.V.Vivo, 1978.

more highly complex than a simple capitalist social formation model indicates. The historically established existance of Marxist ideology has given interpretation, form and direction to a phenomenon that might not otherwise have strongly survived the technological changes in capitalism over two centuries[1].

It is possible that Marxism has been underestimated in its power and influence relative to that of the influence of the economic structure; particularly when that ideological force has an important part of its roots in a material basis outside of a particular capitalist social formation. This may mean that within a given social formation ideological factors may outweigh other factors in inspiring class conflict[2].

If class consciousness is not inevitable then where it does develop we need not expect it to be a lasting phenomenon; that will depend upon a combination of factors - not least the availability of effective leadership. If class consciousness can be overly influenced by ideological factors then we need not expect it to be gradual (e.g., the rapid change in the direction of the Cuban revolution); nor need we expect it to be in response to directly influencing capitalist structural factors (Ethiopa has already been refered to).

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1. Even if Dahrendorf and Mann were correct in their assessment about the weakening link between potential class consciousness and current socio-economic structures they would only be able to draw conclusions from that if they ignore the development of Marxism as an ideological force.

2. This is not an 'idealist' arguement. The influence of (Marxist) ideology draws strength from three material bases - a historic and current link with capitalist structures and a current link with non-capitalist structures.

Revolutionary Leadership.

An adequate understanding of class consciousness and conflict must take into account revolutionary leadership. Here again there are considerable problems for the development of a Marxist approach.

Any theory (as opposed to action) must be devoid of notions of historical destiny or inevitability. Failure to do so has involved some Marxists in a fruitless search for ways to tap the workers' natural but submerged revolutionary consciousness[1].

A central problem for Marxists is that, assuming there to be no supra-empirical way forward, what kind of leadership is most likely to be appropriate/successful and in what conditions? It has been admitted by some Marxists that there are no definite answers[2].

Key aspects of the debate dates back to the clash between Lenin and Luxemburg at the early part of the century. Luxemburg has often been presented as a libertarian socialist in contrast to a bureaucratic centralist Lenin. The contrast and characterisations are false. Certainly she held a belief (shared by E.P.Thompson) in the working class as the makers of history[3]. (Unlike Thompson's) this view was firmly rooted in a structurally determinist model that Althusser might have been proud of. Even her most ardent comrade and biographer - Paul

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1. Such approaches have proven easy to knock down. See, for example, R.K.Brown (1978).

2. Cf. H.Wolpe, 1970 and R.Hyman, 1971.

3. For an interesting discussion and analysis of the debate between Thompson and Althusser see P.Anderson, 1980.

Frölich - writes,

"Certainly Rosa Luxemburd did believe in the existance of 'iron laws' of historical development", (1).

Luxemburg had a strong belief in the inevitability of socialism rising from the ruins of capitalism's structural contradictions. This led her to believe that the conflict generated by such a process would lead to the development of working class consciousness. As Frölich continues,

" . . . for her the executors of these (iron) laws were human beings, the masses in all their millions, their organisations and their leaders, with all their strengths and weaknesses, their actions and their failures", (2).

Luxemburg argued that trade union activity was important in that through it the awareness, the consciousness, of the proletariat becomes socialist and it is organised as a class[3]. This reveals that she accorded a lesser role to ideology than did Lenin. She placed great emphasis upon the role of "spontaneous" action and in her study of the 1905 Russian Revolution she praised the "spontaneous" nature of the actions of the Russian working class[4]. Indeed, she went on to claim that the element of spontaneity played a great role in all Russian strikes:

"In short, in the Russian mass strikes the spontaneous element has played such a predominant role not because the Russian proletariat is "unschooled", but because revolutions can't be school-mastered", (5).

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1. P.Frölich, 1972, p.144.
2. Ibid.
3. Quoted in D.McLellan, 1980, p.46.
4. Mass Strike, Party and Trade Unions, 1906.
5. Quoted in Frölich, op cit, p.136.

This view forms a crucial part in the understanding of her analysis of leadership especially when she goes on to say that,

" . . . it is clear that the mass strike cannot be called at will, even if the decision to call it comes from the highest committee of the strongest Social Democratic Party", (1).

Luxemburg is not disavowing the need for revolutionary leadership but sees its function more as agitational than ideological. She makes this fact clear in a critique of Lenin's 'One Step Forwards, Two Steps Backwards' in which she emphasises her view of the "dialectical" relationship between leaders and masses as against - what she saw as - Lenin's advocacy of mechanical control by Party Central Committee. According to Hyman this view of Luxemburg accords with that of Gramsci who insisted that the Party must not seek to dominate the spontaneous struggle. In Gramsci's view,

"It would be disasterous if a sectarian conception of the Party were to fix in mechanical forms of immediate power an apparatus governing the masses in movement, forcing the revolutionary process into the forms of the Party", (2).

The problem with this concept of "organic" leadership is that it relies too heavily upon an acceptance of some kind of historical destiny or inevitability - those "supra-empirical" factors rejected earlier in this chapter. As such it is unacceptable as a materialist model of leadership. It is a concept of leadership which overly relies upon the particular trends in a given situation; with leaders waiting to give leadership to the revolutionary aspirations of the workers. If, however, class consciousness relies upon interpretation of reality then revolutionary aspirations have to be created - and <u>that</u> is the role of a revolutionary leadership.

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1. Quoted in P.Frölich, op cit, p.136.
2. Quoted in R.Hyman, 1971, p.49.

The case of the UCS Work-in provides a useful example. A criticism from a Luxemburgist group was that the CPGB elements in the leadership were leading the workers' struggle astray;that they were "selling out" the workers aspirations for ultimate workers' control[1]. Yet, had those leaders attempted to interpret the will of the workforce there likely would not have been a Work-in let alone aspirations towards workers' control.

Lenin's view of leadership seems a more useful approach. As early as 1902 he was pointing out that "left to themselves" the working class would only ever develop a trade union consciousness[2]. Thus, he argued for the building of a revolutionary party of class conscious cadres charged with the task of taking political consciousness to the workers. Hyman claims that this position "is a contradiction of that of Marx"[3]. Wolpe points out however that,

> "Lenin agreed with Marx that the conditions of capitalist production directly "awaken the mind of the workers" and bring about the unification of the working class in an organised class struggle. He rejected . . . the contention that Marx had held that revolutionary consciousness would emanate directly either from the conditions of production or the class struggle"(4).

Lenin here recognises that while structural contradictions give rise to conflict this may lead to no more than a limited form of consciousness. It is a rejection of the Luxemburg theory of spontaneity.

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1. See the International Socialist Group's 'SOCIALIST WORKER' editions July 1971 to August 1972.
2. 'What is to be Done', in Lenin, 1961a.
3. R.Hyman, 1971, p.14.
4. 'What is to be Done' - quoted in H.Wolpe, op cit, p.268.

Class consciousness, in Lenin's view, has to be brought to the workers. This has to be in the context of struggle because struggle is a manifestation of both the contradictions of capitalism and doubts about its legitimacy. For Lenin it was not enough to explain to workers that they are 'politically oppressed'. The role of the Party would not be to propagandise from the outside but to do so in the course of the workers' confrontation with the objective conditions[1].

Lenin's model of leadership is one which, as Wolpe points out, assigns a determining role to ideology by way of political action[2]. The success of this model is not hindered by the fact that class consciousness needs to be created rather than discovered or directed. It is a model which sees the need for an organised effort to impose an ideological viewpoint upon a situation.

Accepting the notion that class consciousness may rely upon a combination of structural conflict and revolutionary ideological leadership we are still left with a number of imponderables. Primarily there is the question of the lack of a single body of revolutionary theory. It is likely that the development of class consciousness will be hindered to the extent that workers in conflict are faced with more than one anti-capitalist interpretation of reality.

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1. 'What is to be Done?' - quoted in H.Wolpe, op cit, p.268.
2. H.Wolpe, op cit, p.270.

Since the establishment of communist parties during the first quarter of this century workers have been faced with two major left interpretations of reality - marxist and social democratic. From a Marxist perspective this has meant that two major forms of class consciousness have been possible; a partial, non-revolutionary and thus distorted form of consciousness as a result of social democratic intervention among the workers, or a developed, revolutionary consciousness as a result of the correct communist leadership[1]. Both ideological forms have and still do command masses of workers throughout the world.

By and large, it was possible in the period up to the end of World War II for a Marxist to judge the development of class consciousness. As a great majority of Marxists were communist party members[2] revolutionary class consciousness could be equated with communist party membership. Since the War the situation has become very much more complex. There are now several models of communist-led states, a vast number of different parties claiming to be Marxist, differences between and within parties calling themselves communist.

The result has been that the "working class" has been faced with a choice of Marxist interpretations of reality[3] and this makes it increasingly difficult to judge the impact of a particular Marxist group or party upon critical events. Structural

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1. This kind of thinking typified CPGB circles up until the early 1970s and was likely true of most other former Comintern parties.

2. At this time Trotskyism, the main Marxist alternative, had an extremely small following anywhere in the world - except for a short period in Poland.

3. In Britain for example the critical worker has the choice of the Eurocommunist CPGB, the pro-Soviet NCP, the Maoist CPB(ML), the neo-Trotskyist SWP or hardline Trotskyist WRP, and many others. Cf. D.Widgery, 1976.

contradictions may give rise to conflict which may, in turn, lead to a questioning of the legitimacy of capitalism. This questioning, however, may be prevented from turning into revolutionary consciousness due, not only to capitalist and/or social democratic ideology, to the existance of competing "revolutionary" ideologies.

I would argue that the acceptance of a particular revolutionary leadership will likely rely upon deep-seated economic crisis[1], the actions of a particular revolutionary leadership prior to and in response to the crisis, and developments within the Eastern Bloc[2]. But all this is grounds for further research beyond the scope of this particular work.

A Question of Class.

Ironically one of the most difficult controversies to confront post-1956 Marxists has been the question of class or, more succinctly, who or what constitutes the "working class". It is a question has not been adequately dealt with by Marxists in the field of 'industrial relations'.

In many ways this brings us back to the debate raised at the begining of this chapter concerning epistemological questions. Namely, does class struggle reflect "alienation" or "exploitation"; the former having its roots in "human essence" and the latter in structural contradictions. I have already

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1. H.Wolpe, op cit, has critically reviewed the varying explanations for revolutionary action and dismisses them all as inadequate and empirically not proven. While agreeing with his scepticism and call for further research there does seem to be a case for saying that there is a strong association between revolution and deep-seated socio-economic crisis.

2. Developments in the Eastern Bloc have had both positive and negative impacts upon the ability of some revolutionary parties to provide successful leadership.

argued[1] that a scientific approach must be based on an analysis of (tangible) human behaviour rather than (teleological) human essence[2]. Thus the concept of "exploitation" needs to be taken as the key to understanding social action[3].

This concept helps to answer several questions - why it is that the "working class" come into being; how it is sustained and how consciousness is developed and why it is that it is the "revolutionary class" in the capitalist mode of production.

The concept of "exploitation" defines the following process. At the economic level surplus labour is extracted from the worker in a process which involves the imposition of job regulation and control. Surplus labour produces surplus value and this has a significance at the social and political level which provides a level of experience which may, in turn, be significant back at the economic level.

This process helps to shape the potential ideological thinking of the producers of surplus value. In common with others they face job regulation and control and intensifications of surplus labour extraction - involving such things as effort intensification, long hours, wage restraint, redundancies and the spectre of mass unemployment.

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1. See the section in this chapter on "structuralism or humanism".
2. In this arguement I am agreeing with Althusser, 1970a & 1971 and rejecting that of Thompson - see P.Anderson, 1980.
3. What I am looking at in this section is the question of which aggregate of working people are the revolutionary core of the working class as a whole.

At the socio-economic level they are presented with plenty of opportunities to perceive contradictions between their productive efforts and the way society is organised. In times of economic decline, despite the years they may have spent in the production of wealth, they are now confronted with a destruction of capital. In times of economic growth they may witness a lack or relative lack of improvement in their social conditions.

In short, the producers of surplus value are constantly put in situations of contradiction between their contribution and what they receive - economically and socially - in return. Relative to other types of employee the producers of surplus value - in an aggregate sense - might be thought the more likely to perceive the need for social change in the direction of socialism. Divisions are built out of the use of surplus value and conflict over its use and control effectively amounts to questions about the nature and control of the means of production[1].

The revolutionary class needs to be that aggregate of people better placed to perceive (and experience) the various aspects of the process of exploitation. They must not only be in a critical position to perceive an economic identity of interest among themselves but also a social and political division of interests between their aggregate number and those of the 'owning class'. Finally they need to be well placed to perceive the ownership and control of the means of production as a solution to the structural contradictions they confront. This potential is,

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1. Up to a point I am agreeing here with the position of Poulantzas, 1978. Where I differ should, hopefully, become clear in the development of the arguement later in the chapter.

argueably, at its sharpest where the worker is able to perceive that their labour is turned into surplus value and by an owning group. These factors are important to bear in mind when we come to consider the debate; they are, however, far from unproblematic.

A key problem with the debate is that some Marxists set themselves the aim of assertaining which aggregate of working people are the potentially revolutionary class (e.g., Poulantzas, 1978). Sometimes the identified group are refered to as the"proletariat"(suggesting an advanced section of the working class)[1] and sometimes, more confusingly, the "working class"(suggesting that other working people are excluding from this general concept). Other Marxists seem to be overly concerned with identifying which categories of workers form the"working class" and without reference to whether some sections are potentially more revolutionary or not. Thus often the debate is at cross purposes. So it is to the implications underlying the debate that this chapter will address itself to. The concern here is not so much who is included in the "working class" as who constitutes the revolutionary core of that class.

Post-Capitalism and Class.

The formulation that the producers of surplus value are the revolutionary core of the working class has been a focal point of attack on Marxism by the "post-capitalist" theorists of the 1950s and '60s.

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1. That is the concern of this work.

Dahrendorf[1], for instance, argues that this group of workers is a numerically diminishing one. It is no longer the majority class in any major 'industrial society'. With the growth of capital has come the growth of large stockholding companies and the development of the 'Welfare State'; both bringing forth a massive increase in the number of administrative and clerical workers that neither produce surplus value nor work for a clearly defined capitalist owner. (One group are employed by a non-owning managerial group and the other by the State).

Marxists have more than sufficiently confronted the claim that certain industrial societies are no longer capitalist[2]. They have given less attention to the implications of the changes refered to for the development of class consciousness and action.

Frankel[3], for example, centers his attack on the weakest element of the post-capitalist thesis[4] which claims that the administrative and clerical workers are now part of the new "middle class". He argues that these groups have witnessed a rapid deterioration in pay relativity, occupational status and job stability and that this has led them into unionisation and militant action. They are, therefore, part of the working class according to Frankel. He fails, however, to deal with the specific nature of the consciousness expressed by 'white collar' militancy nor to discuss the implications for a predictive model of revolutionary consciousness and action.

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1. Dahrendorf exemplifies the post-capitalist arguement. That is not to suggest that there are not differences of emphasis within that perspective.
   In a classically Weberian stance he differs with Marx on the basis of class position - refering to the existance of authority structures rather than surplus value production.
2. Cf. R.Blackburn,'67/H.Frankel,'70/P.Corrigan,'77/I.Gough,'79.
3. H.Frankel, op cit.
4. That is, the work of F.Zweig.

Blackburn[1] discusses how the "Welfare State" is ultimately used in the service of capital[2] and how the divorce of ownership from control arguement is fallacious, but he also fails to discuss the implications of those factors upon the consciousness of different groups of employees.

Even the pioneering Marxist texts on industrial relations theory have only touched upon the subject[3]. Allen, for instance, implies that the working-class is composed of all non-owning employees:

> "All employees are in the same objective economic position and, irrespective of their social backgrounds, their educational standards, their income levels; their skills and their authority positions, they respond by forming trade unions and engaging in forms of industrial action", (4).

This tells us nothing about the respective potential of different employees but, in countering 'new working class' theories[5] he states that,

> "There is no useful evidence at hand to show that one labour force composition rather than another will prevent the emergence of a common class consciousness when the pressures from the objective economic position become sufficiently intense"(6).

There are a number of problems with this approach - some of which will be taken up later. It doesn't, for instance,

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1. R.Blackburn, 1967.
2. See also D.N.Pritt, 1963 and P.Corrigan, 1977 and I.Gough,1979
3. I am refering to V.L.Allen, 1971 and R.Hyman, 1975.
4. V.L.Allen, 1972, p.154.
5. The theorists include N.Birnbaum, 1963; S.Mallet, 1963 and A.Tourane, 1966.
6. V.L.Allen, 1972, p.154.

tell us the potential differences between employees in the development of (revolutionary) class consciousness. For instance, how "intense" must 'objective economic pressures' be before some employees become class consciousness? Indeed, are there any differences in the way the position of "non-ownership" is experienced and does this have any implications for the development of trade unionism, industrial action and revolution? As Allen is aware not all employees have unionised at the same rate or in the same way or over the same time scale. Nor are all groups of workers prepared to engage in the same level or type of industrial action if at all: it was largely the industrial workers that took part in the political strikes and occupations of the period.

As a rejoinder to Allen's latter quote I would argue that nor is there any useful evidence to the contrary. It very much depends what is meant by "common class consciousness" and "sufficiently intense" economic pressures. I am concerned with an analysis that will help us to identify the elements of an effective revolutionary strategy: what is the potential for revolution in a given social formation, what groups of workers are more likely to respond to revolutionary leadership, which groups are more likely to form the basis of that revolutinary leadership, and what groups are more likely to ally themselves with the revolutionary core. Allen does not adequately help us answer these questions.

Class and Surplus Value.

The work of Poulantzas[1] was instrumental in raising questions about the Marxist concept of class. He was concerned to refocus the debate by refering the question to the overall analysis of the dynamic of capitalism. He was interested in explaining how capitalism gives rise to its own "grave diggers" and which group of workers this involves.

He identified the production of surplus value as a key element in the development of class consciousness - by which he seems to mean revolutionary class consciousness. Thus he classifies the revolutionary core or "proletariat" as all those directly involved in the production of surplus value; by and large, the industrial manual workers.

This definition has been criticised as unduly narrow. Bloomfield claims that it confuses,

". . . productive labour in its specific capitalist and social sense (i.e., labour producing surplus value) with labour producing material objects", (2).

This, she claims, leads to the exclusion from the working class[3] of those involved in the production of non-material commodities. Bloomfield argues that it wrongly excludes those involved in the circulation and sale of commodities and she quotes, approvingly, an alternative formulation by Carchedi:

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1. N.Poulntzas, 1978.

2. J.Bloomfield, 1978, p.330. Bloomfield's emphasis.

3. It isn't entirely clear if some writers are discussing the same question or using the same concepts. Bloomfield strays a bit - sometimes implying that "working class" is to be equated with "proletariat" in Poulantzas' use and sometimes to refer to a broader concept of working class. I shall address myself to the former equation.

"Carchedi defines the difference between the productive and unproductive sectors as production of surplus value and production for surplus value. Although surplus labour does not take the form of surplus value in the commercial sphere, the worker is still forced to perform it and is therefore oppressed", (1).

This formulation becomes even more compelling in the following quote:

"In order to labour productively it is no longer necessary for you to do manual work yourself; enough if you are an organ of the collective labourer, and perform one of its subordinate functions", (2).

All this has a certain logic to it. Whether the employees are in production or sales, at the subjective level they will be potentially able to perceive that profits are being made out of their labour. But Bloomfield is asking us to put "oppression" on a level with "exploitation" as an organising concept, and they are very different in their implications.

Using Bloomfield's formulation we might include all employees in the category "proletariat"[3]. It might be argued that the state employee is part of the "collective worker" given that state agencies ultimately function to maintain capitalism. This ignores the structural situation of those employees[4]: the difference in structural situation and relationship to the means of production will likely have different potential implications for the subjectivity of those employees compared to production workers.

The question of those involved in the sale and circulation of commodities presents a different problem. A large

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1. Bloomfield, op cit, p.330. Her emphasis.

2. Ibid.

3. See note 3 on the preceeding page.

4. These workers do not produce surplus value nor work for a capitalist owner: they are looked at closer in following sections of this chapter.

number of them, relative to production workers, are employed in small workplaces or work individually. In such cases this likely reduces their ability to develop a revolutionary class consciousness. But there are several exceptions to this: notably, railway and dock workers. Both groups have a history of revolutionary class consciousness in various industrial societies[1]. Explanation may lie in the fact that the activities of these workers are closely allied to the production of surplus value (and, certainly, its realization). In fact this has provided a direct link between railway workers and direct production workers - particularly miners and steel workers.

I would argue that revolutionary class consciousness can develop among workers not directly involved in the production of surplus value but likely in conditions where there is not a sharp break in their work from the production of surplus value: it is possible also that work that brings direct association with production workers strengthens the process.

However, I should reiterate at this point that I am centrally concerned about which aggregate of workers are potentially the revolutionary core of the working class as a whole. The production of surplus value is the factor which provides the structural basis for class conflict, and which helps to structure or direct the form of an alternative (socialist) solution. Thus the producers of surplus value are potentially the revolutionary core of the working class. Some other groups of workers may also have revolutionary potential but relative to and in association with the producers of surplus value.

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1. See Chapter 3.

Bloomfield's attempt to include service workers under the category of proletariate is tenuous: they tend to work individually or in small groups and their link with surplus value is weak.

Other Marxists have attempted to include non-manual workers in the category of proletariat or working class - often with confusing results[1].

The 'new working class' theorists, for instance, seem to have fallen into the trap of adopting the very post-capitalist ideas they attempted to counter[2]. In varying degrees they have argued that the revolutionary class center has shifted from the production workers to the growing class of technicians and administrators. These workers are able to perceive a contradiction in their authority position; on the one hand, being expropriated from control of administration, while, on the other hand, possessing the skills without which administration would be impossible. This authority imbalance pushes them in a revolutionary direction.

Mann[3] has argued that, on the contrary, these groups of employees have much to lose by their opposition to capital and objectively - due to their relatively privileged occupational situation - are less likely to develop class consciousness than production workers.

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1. See note 3 on page of this Chapter.

2. They are almost 'leftist' post-capitalists! It is a theory which shares common ground with Dahrendorf rather than Marx - focusing upon contradictions due to disparity of authority and underplaying economic contradictions as the basis of conflict.

3. M.Mann, 1973.

Alan Hunt, on the other hand, argues for the inclusion of the "vast majority of those in non-manual occupations". His main distinction is,

" . . . between those whose primary economic activity is to carry out the functions of the capitalist, and are closely integrated with the successes of capitalism, and those whose primary position is the selling of their labour power", (1).

In support of his claim he refers to such things as non-manual unionisation and the fact that,

" . . . the majority of the non-manual workers are not separated in their style of life from manual workers to the degree that existed at the turn of the century" (2).

By concentrating on 'life styles' and consumption patterns he is able to claim that,

"The position of the middle strata, then, is that we must underline their membership of the working class properly defined; the separation that exists is subjective and ideological in character, and its objective basis is less stable", (3).

Hunt confuses several issues. Once again we have the failure to distinguish between the proletariat and the working class as a whole. Nor does he listen to himself when later he points out that those same workers are made up of,

" . . . a very wide range of occupational and social categories, so as to deny (them) a meaningful homogeneity", (4).

Nor does Hunt deal with the peculiar situation of state employees.

Bloomfield[5] has correctly identified Hunt's overall problem as one of basing theory upon 'political aspirations'. This is clearer in a later work where he states that in analysing

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1. A.Hunt, 1973.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. J.Bloomfield, op cit.

class and class structure,

" ... it is of paramount importance that the political implications are kept to the forefront. These can be presented somewhat schematically as a choice between a 'broad' and 'narrow' definition of the working class", (1).

From a different premise Carchedi comes to a similar conclusion that non-manual workers should be included in, what he calls, the concept of the "collective" worker. He goes further than Hunt in arguing that managerial labour is undergoing a process of 'proletarianisation'[2].

The question is clearly complex. We need to complete the task only touched upon by Hunt, and that is to distinguish between the occupational locations of non-manual workers. Using the surplus value production focus we can exclude from the proletariat the vast majority of non-manual state employees, those employed in the service industry and, to a lessor extent, those involved in the sales and circulation industries. By and large, this leaves us with those non-manual workers employed in the production industries.

This brings us to the question of how rigidly should we equate proletariat with direct producer of surplus value. Possibly within the surplus value production focus Carchedi's "collective worker" concept takes on more relevance. Although performing different functions it is increasingly difficult to separate out the contributions of manual and non-manual workers

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1. A.Hunt, 1977, p.83.

2. E.Olin Wright, 1978 excludes managerial and mental labour from the concept of "working class".

to surplus value production. In the process there is often a close working association between both groups of workers and this in itself may bridge the structural gap that might exist. Indeed Marx himself did not link the term "working class" solely to physical labour. The changing nature of the productive forces has meant that a growing number of technical and scientific workers have been drawn into production processes as direct producers[1].

On the question of supervisory and managerial employees Hunt[2] seems correct in his distinction, but not in the implications that he draws. Clearly, these employees cannot be counted as part of the proletariat. Poulantzas[3] likewise points out that their role is one of collusion in the ideological subordination of the working class. That is not to say, however, that they cannot be won to the side of the working class given the correct conditions and leadership. Carchedi may not be correct in referring to the "proletarianization" of the managers, but he does show that increasing numbers are being won to unionization and militant action as capitalism reaches a critical situation[4].

State Employees.

Workers employed by the State occupy a peculiar structural location in capitalist social formations. They are far from being a homogenous group. There are those employed in the mining industry,

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1. Cf. T.Timsfeyev and A.Chemyaev, 1973.
2. A.Hunt, 1973.
3. N.Poulantzas, 1978
4. A.Hunt, 1973 references the growth of ASTMS as evidence of the unionization of the 'middle strata'.

railyways, steel, electricity and gas supply, and the newer state industries of car production (Leyland) and shipbuilding. Then there are those involved in such sectors as health, welfare, education and various kind of civil service functions.

There are - perhaps inevitably - several conflicting views about the revolutionary potential of these workers. Some Marxists without distinction would include the great bulk of these workers in the category "working class", if not "proletariat", on the grounds that they are all in the same position of having to sell their labour[1]. Others would exclude those involved in the civil service, health, welfare and education sections because they are in the objective position of agents of the state and, thus, of capitalism. Additionally they are divorced from the production of surplus value except in assisting capital to ensure that the process is a smooth one[2].

This latter view has been associated with a view of the State which is seen as legally owning the means of production on behalf of the capitalist class, with the real ownership and control carried on as in other capitalist enterprises[3]. Bloomfield has contested this view as one which,

" . . . suffers from a fatal economism. The State is never just capital personified, but is itself an outcome of class struggle"(4).

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1. Cf. V.L.Allen, 1971 and A.Hunt, 1973 & 1978.

2. Cf. N.Poulantzas, 1978.

3. Cf. N.Poulantzas, 1973 and G.Carchedi, 1977.

4. J.Bloomfield, op cit. P.Corrigan, 1977 makes a similar point (in contradiction to I.Gough, 1979) on the development of the 'Welfare State'.

Bloomfield goes on, however, to argue that this means that a large number of state employed workers are part of the "working class". Along with Frankel[1] and Hunt[2] she points to the growing militancy of workers in this sphere[3]. And, singling out school teachers, she talks of the possibility because of their occupational location of them being more able, under certain condition, to identify their function as 'ideological' in the services of capitalism and thus turn their skills in the opposite direction.

It is indeed true that a growing number of state employees has become unionised and have taken part in industrial disputes. True also that some workers such as the school teachers have reflected socialist views in advance of other sections of working people. The explanation for this is, however, crucial to the arguement.

Clegg and Dunkerly[4], for instance, argue that due to the combination of economic, ideological and political factors different industrial sectors exist and are governed by different modes of rationality. Thus, what they call the "non-CSA" (non-capitalist state activities) sector will have a smaller degree of "class organisation" than the "monopoly" and "CSA" sectors[5].

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1.H.Frankel, 1970.

2.A.Hunt, 1973.

3.P.Corrigan, 1977, likewise, in dealing with the 'Welfare State' refers to it as "an arena of class struggle".

4.S.Clegg & D.Dunkerly, 1980, pp.540-555.

5.Non-CSA include workers in such civil service work as the Industrial Reorganisation commission and those employed in Technical Colleges, etc. Monopoly sector workers include engineering and shipbuilding workers, etc. CSA sector workers include those employed in the steel and mining industries, etc.

They go on to show how struggles in other sectors can lead to situations which encourage non-CSA workers to act. For instance, they argue that states, in attempting to rescue capitalism in times of crisis, have cut expenditures in the non-CSA sector. This in turn has lead to the situation where,

> " . . . cuts in public expenditure . . . creates often highly educated and unemployable workers whose skills are not readily transferable, and so have to enter employment at a much lower status-level than would otherwise have been the case. Teachers in particular have suffered these cuts in Britain . . . An unemployed, unemployable or under-employed intelligentsia is the precondition for a radicalized, alienated intelligentsia . . ."(1).

Non-CSA workers, thus, respond to crisis measures but often following upon the actions of other workers. This is the case with wages. Habermas[2], for example, has shown that action by workers in the main production industries ("monopoly" sector) pushed up wages and caused disparity between their pay and that of non-CSA workers. This helped to encourage the growth of trade unionism in the non-CSA sector and led to such actions as the 'winter of discontent' strikes by NUPE in early 1979.

Therefore I would argue that we must retain surplus value production as a focal point in judging the potential of state employees. Those groups closest in potential to the proletariat are those whose function is closest to the production process and who, due to their historical association with state employment are not far removed from the experience of capitalist as opposed to state ownership. This would include

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1. Clegg & Dunkerly, op cit, p.548.

2. J.Habermas, 1976.

miners, railwaymen, steel workers, shipyard workers, etc whose industries were closely linked to, if not part of, the capitalist process of surplus value production and came out of private ownership within living memory. The culture, history and political activity has in large part been shaped by the previous relationship to private ownership and likely gives those workers a potentially high political understanding. A lot may depend upon the ability of ideological militants within those industries to keep those traditions high. The relative differences in consciousness and militancy vis-à-vis non-state production workers may depend on further factors such as the structure of the industry and of the union[1].

The militancy of other sections of state employees, particularly non-CSA workers, is certainly possible and has been demonstrated but that, like their revolutionary potential, is likely hinged ultimately upon the consciousness and action of those involved in the production of surplus value.

Summary.

I have argued that in order to understand the existance, manifestations, and continued vitality of class conflict we need to understand both its objective material basis and its reflection/interpretation in ideological factors.

The nature of that material basis ( including, primarily, the process of surplus value production) fails to guarentee the direction that conflict will take; ruling out any historical

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1. Cf. R.Martin, 1968 and D.J.Edelstein & M.Warner, 1975 on how such factors affect the militancy of various unions.
G.Ingham, 1975 discusses the link between infrastructure and union structure.

inevitability of socialism. Class consciousness has to be developed out of the conflicts thrown up by the material basis. It has to be developed, shaped and formed by the intervention of a revolutionary leadership - relying on the adequacy of its interpretation of reality and of particular events.

Thus, I would argue that if we want to understand any given situation in the sphere of industrial relations we need to look at factors beyond the immediate circumstances. We need a theoretical understanding of the objective basis of class conflict and its development in a particular social formation. We need to know the contributions of significant revolutionary and other working class orientated parties to the industrial relations structure and climate generally and specifically. In this way we can understand the drives and influences that have shaped and will shape the given situation.

But we need to be cautious. The fact that leadership has to develop class consciousness means that we need not necessarily expect that development to be automatic; nor uniform - even across comparible workers; nor need we expect it to be lasting; nor need we expect it to be a full blown revolutionary consciousness; and nor need we expect it to be uncontradictory in its elements.

The history of working-class orientated parties (e.g., communist and social democratic) means that there has been a long history of different interpretations of reality, with consequent affects upon the development of class consciousness. Therefore, we might expect those following the lead of a revolutionary party to have experienced some shift in consciousness but we should not necessarily expect it to be fully in accord with

that party's definition of class consciousness.

In other words, in attempting to analyse the role of a revolutionary party in a given situation a relative lack of revolutionary class consciousness, changes after time to a lessor consciousness, and contradictory consciousness elements cannot be taken as evidence of that party's influence. All the structural, historical and current ideological influences must be weighed.

Marxist industrial relations theory and workplace occupations. In studying the advent of workplace occupations I have used a level of analysis which refers to ultimate links and certain historical developments. To begin with, I have attempted to show a link between socio-economic crisis and the advent of mass or widespread occupations in various countries, over different points of time[1]. Two things are implied. Firstly, that somehow workplace occupations are significantly different forms of industrial action. Secondly, that such actions are more likely to develop in times of fairly severe economic crisis.

That such actions are significantly different lies in three directions, i) the logical implications inherent in such actions, i.e., the fact that a high level of control is exercised over the plant and machinery as opposed to a withdrawal of labour. The structure of the situation provides a greater potential for the development of consciousness.

ii) the fact that such actions are usually accompanied by statements which claim that the actions are radical developments; statements by those involved, statements by revolutionary groups, statements by employers and statements by the media that all help to define the situation.

1. Chapters 3 and 5.

iii) the fact that the context of such actions has more often than not been one of widespread political unrest and challenge. In other words, those occupations could be seen as an important contributory factor to a radical change in political climate.

The specific nature of the socio-economic crisis in Britain since the mid-1960s is examined[1] in order to gain an understanding of the subjective experience of the actors involved in workplace occupations. At, what might be simplistically called, the 'economic' level large scale redundancy and inflationary pressures placed a large number of workers in threatened positions concerning their jobs and living conditions generally. This factor alone is not an adequate explanation for radical action. To that end I have focussed upon the role of ideology and of leadership.

The complexity of the dialectical relationship between 'economy' and 'superstructure' means that the onset of the economic crisis is not the starting point, nor the only aspect of the crisis situation. I have examined various strands of what might be deemed necessary for radical action to occur. It probably takes an organised leadership to encourage and define radical action. Leadership, however, is not merely a social psychological phenomenon of personality and group dynamics. In order for a group of workers to respond in a new (radical) way to a relatively standard situation (redundancies, pay disputes) they need to accept a potential leadership's definition of the situation, i.e., as warranting radical action. Thus I have

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1. Chapters 5 and 7.

examined what were the likely preconditions of militancy[1]. Here I have argued that the basis of socio-economic crisis began almost a decade prior to a critical point in the economic downturn. Primarily I have focused upon the role of government in regard to industrial relations as they struggled to cope with two major elements of the growing crisis - the economic downturn and the growth of union militancy[2]: increasingly 'economistic' militancy began to give way to a more politically orientated militancy as successive governments moved to control unions and restrict wage demands. This made a likely contribution towards a weakening of capitalist hegemony and allowed the acceptance, to a certain extent, of ideological left-wing industrial leadership to be realized.

The politicization of sections of workers, their acceptance of a certain kind of leadership and their willingness to engage in radical action was not a simple process of crisis-government intervention-crisis. Only a minority of workers became involved in the movement of political strikes and workplace occupations. For leadership to be in a position to push its advantage it is likely that there needs to be either an absence of certain structural constraints and/or the existance of structural arrangements that facilitate militancy.

As I detail later[3], a relatively small number of trade unions had members involved in political strikes and workplace occupations and even then involvement was disproportionate, e.g.,

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1. Chapter 5
2. Ibid.
3. Chapter 9

the ASTMS had a much greater involvement than the very much larger NUGMW. To this end I examine trade union structure to see if there are any clues to the type of union structure which best facilitates union militancy[1]. The general finding is that shop-floor or rank-and-file organisation formed the backbone of the workplace occupations, industrial and political strikes of the period. The fact that, relative to any other British trade union, the AUEW structure allowed shopfloor participation in decision making at almost all levels provides a possible explanation of the union's leading position in regard to industrial militancy[2].

Once again, however, it is clear that even these references are not fully adequate. Certain union structures may have facilitated militancy but that is not the same as having encouraged it. The role of ideological leadership and that of the CPGB in particular was examined as a possibly key factor[3]. My arguement is that the role of the Party must be examined in regard to the total context within which workplace occupations appeared. Their contribution was, argueably, often important in indirect ways. For instance, the CPGB played an important role in the maintenance and development of shopfloor and rank-and-file organisation prior to the onset of widespread union militancy in the late 1950's/early '60's. It was to the fore in resisting attacks on shopfloor organization from the T.U.C. (1959-60), employers' associations (1960), Labour (1966-70) and Conservative (1970-74) governments.

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1. Chapters 6 and 9.
2. Chapter 9.
3. Chapter 10.

The UCS Work-in is almost a microcosm of my arguement concerning the importance of the CPGB's contribution. For years the CPGB spent time building a Party branch and helping to develop/strengthen shopfloor organisation at the relevant yards that were to become the UCS later. They co-ordinated the actions of several unions' members across five shipyards. They encouraged and gave leadership to militant actions on several issues, including redundancy. They encouraged participation of the workforce in political strikes and, finally, they were listened to when they advocated a work-in. In the event that work-in became the spark for a whole series of other occupations[1].

The role of an ideologically left leadership was one of giving encouragement, direction and definition to action out of a definate set of conditions and preconditions. Socio-economic crisis has been refered to but it did not necessarily affect all workers in the same way. In examining particular workplace situations[2] there seems to be a strong link between militancy and 'bad' industrial relations practice.

It has been argued elsewhere[3] that "industrial relations" is maintained by a set of norms and expectations of "fair" practices. In many occupied companies, especially those involving

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1. There is a definate link between the advent and character of workplace occupations and ideologically left leadership. That leadership has tended to encourage and/or initiate the action and then help turn it into a radically challenging event. See Chapter 3.

2. Chapter 8.

3. A.Fox and A.Flanders, 1969.

redundancies or closures, prior management action was such as to offend against worker expectations of "fairness" within a capitalist system. In short, it did not need revolutionary shifts in consciousness to encourage radical action.

Another link with militancy appears to be company size and structure; many occupations occurring in multi-plant and multi-national companies. The ruthless pursuit of particular profit levels, coupled with the remoteness of the owning group and the higher management, exacerbated bad managerial practice.

Looking at the nature of those industries which experienced workplace occupations[1] the great majority can be classified as being direct exploiters of surplus labour and the production of surplus value; supporting the notion of a possible primacy of surplus value production in the advent of radical to revolutionary action. Indeed the workers of many of those industrial concerns came to workplace occupations after a history of militancy which put them among the foremost 'strike prone' industries in Britain at that time. Historically occupation workforces have been mainly drawn from the industries involved in the production of surplus value, i.e., miners, steel workers, car workers, and printers, and those closely allied to the process - railway and shipyard workers[2]. The character of those trade union sections involved, in particular in the British occupations, were overwhelmingly industrial[3]. And if we look at the industrial base of the CPGB we find that roughly sixty percent of their membership is drawn from the surplus value producing industries[4].

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1. Chapter 8.
2. Chapter 3.
3. Chapter 9.
4. Chapter 10.

Some critical problems concerning action and consciousness.

I have argued throughout this work that workplace occupations can be associated with changes in class consciousness, i.e., changes towards a higher level of class consciousness. The arguement has been twofold - firstly, that workplace occupations in themselves signal a prior shift in consciousness and, secondly, that the occupations helped to further the process.

The arguement is based on the evidence that in several important instances the workers were encouraged into action by a leadership who made it explicitly clear that such action was radically challenging to capital at different levels. It is based on the evidence that in some cases a previously strike-free workforce moved in such a direction; often with great relish and accompanying socialistic slogans - e.g., Coles Cranes; Fakenham, etc. It is based upon reports from several occupation leaders, government and employer statements and media reporting which defined the actions as radically challenging and reported evidence of changes experienced in the expressions of the workers involved, e.g., UCS; Propytex; BCP, etc. It is also based on evidence of reported membership gains by the CPGB and other left-wing groups from those involved in occupations.

Nonetheless, the question of "consciousness" changes raises a number of problems. If, for example, occupations were reflections of a response to structural conflict why did they not lead to even more radical action such as revolutionary seizures of workplaces? Why is it that there seems little evidence of a widespread radicalization of those involved? Why did

organisations such as the CPGB fail to sustain membership growth and fail to improve its political position at the polls? How is it that a large section of the labour and trade union movement went on to adhere to incomes policy and wage restraint so soon after the radical period of 1971-5? And how is it that occupations have become a more or less standard weapon in the armoury of the trade unions but one with an apparent lack of radical challenge?

Such criticisms have been made or implied by Mann[1] and by Brown[2] with fairly telling results. To answer such questions I would refer back to the arguements made earlier in this chapter concerning the nature of ideology and consciousness.

I have argued that the nature of capitalism and the development of "revolutionary" ideas, parties and countries means that there is a continued potentiality for revolutionary consciousness and social change. But, that this "potentiallity" depends upon the ability of "revolutionary" leadership to get their interpretation of events accepted. This can mean that someone may attain revolutionary consciousness at one point only to lose it at another point if curcumstances change[3].

In order for revolutionary consciousness to have been developed and sustained to any significant degree there would at least have had to existed an influencial revolutionary party (or parties). The CPGB, the largest British Marxist organisation, numbered thirty thousand members in the early/mid 1970s. and had not been much larger in the two preceeding

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1. M.Mann, 1973.
2. R.K.Brown, 1978.
3. M.Liebman, 1980 argues that post-revolutionary Russia experienced a regression in revolutionary consciousness among large numbers of workers

decades.

If revolutionary consciousness can be eroded then it seems likely that a lesser degree of class consciousness can be eroded - and quicker. By and large, it is probable that revolutionary consciousness was only attained by a minority of previously non-revolutionary union militants of the period. For the great majority a change in consciousness likely meant a shift towards greater class consciousness relative to the level they were previously at. The CPGB and other left militants gave leadership to discontent and it is likely that some people accepted their definition of the broader situation while others did not but saw radical action as appropriate nonetheless.

It did not take "explosions of consciousness"[1] to produce widespread radical action; it took a number of socio-economic pressure to produce discontent, and effective leadership[2] to exploit but not necessarily revolutionize that discontent. To this extent I agree with Lenin's arguement that a revolution does not require, as Luxemburg would have it, that a majority of the working class attain a revolutionary consciousness[3]. It may well be that radical actions follow a pattern of a small, ideological leadership leading a much larger group of disgruntled but not essentially revolutionary people. Perhaps in this way the CPGB get their industrial militants accepted in certain

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1. R.Hyman, 1978. R.K.Brown, 1978 has managed to affectively criticise this position which Hyman insists on clinging to.

2. Without effective leadership discontent would likely not be transformed - such cases would include the two non-militant railwayworkshops in Darlington refered to in Chapter 1.

3. Cf. R.Hyman, 1971 who takes up this particular debate.

leadership positions but fail to pick up many votes in the political sphere[1].

If revolutionary consciousness has to be shaped by ideological intervention then the impact of a revolutionary party will depend on several things including its own ideological certainty. The CPGB of the late 1960's was undergoing the most significant crisis of ideology in its entire history; following 'Hungary '56', the denunciation of Stalin ('56), the Sino-Soviet split ('60), 'Czechoslovakia '68', and the advent of "Eurocommunism". The discussions, policy decisions and leadership changes in the Party in the late 1960's/early '70's saw the CPGB in deep array and divisions. Eventually a substantial minority left the Party in 1976 and formed a "New Communist Party". When revolutionary "truth" is divided into alternative propositions something has to give and in the event hundreds of members lost "faith". This weakened the Paty's ability to recruit and retain members.

The ideological divisions within the CPGB and its miniscule size generally ensured that the ideological influence of the Labour Party retained its powerful hold upon the thinking of large sections of the labour movement. With the election of a Labour Government in 1974 it is likely that a large number of workers felt that this represented social change and thus

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1. My arguement that the CPGB played an influencial role in the development and spread of occupations has recently been challenged - K.Coates, 1981, pp.112-113. Coats bases his arguement on the premise that class consciousness and action arise from direct and immediate connections with certain events. But even then he ignores the history of the CPGB branch at UCS or the influence of the Party in the Sheffield Steel industry.

   Additionally he badly misquotes my work so as to give the impression that I have claimed that 40,000 AUEW members were also in the CPGB.

either accepted or failed to challenge the wage restraint policies of that Government.

By the end of the decade the CPGB's Broad Left influence had been eroded in the AUEW and to some extent in the NUM and TGWU. The Labour Government had disillusioned sections of workers. Unemployment had reached massive proportions and was cutting into the power of the unions by undermining shopfloor militancy. In this atmosphere the Labour Government was defeated and the Thatcher Government elected. Higher levels of unemployment followed. Unlike the Heath Government the Thatcher Government began a new decade facing a relatively weakened and disillusioned trade union movement. We await developments!

From the middle of the 1970's workplace occupations have become a regular but less challenging weapon. What had happened was that they had lost the latter two elements of the three factors refered to above as defining their challenge[1]. Often enough they would be embarked upon by shopfloor leaders who lacked revolutionary commitment and who failed to define the action as radical. Within this latter period such actions have taken place against a political and industrial background of retreat and relative acquiescence. The weapon is still there, however, for the revolutionary left to exploit should they again be in a position to seize the initiative. In the meantime the tactic is being kept exercised.

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1. See page

CHAPTER 3

## AN OUTLINE HISTORY OF WORKER OCCUPATIONS.

". . . workplace occupations have occured in other countries, at other times, (and) have usually been underlined by a widespread socio-economic crisis" (1).

### Introduction.

It is not intended to provide a documented history of workers' control. The aim is to show that workplace occupations are not unique to Britain; to point out features common to each situation involving such actions; but to provide at least a brief history of a subject which has, as yet, no overall historical appraisal.

In some senses the findings are not dramatic: occupations occured in periods of severe crisis and were in many ways inspired by trade unionists schooled in radical-left traditions. These factors, nonetheless, go quite a way to providing an explanation of the development of British workplace occupations in the 1970s. It is an essential theme of this work that explanation concerning the development of British worker occupations must primarily take account of the nature of the socio-economic crisis of the country at that period and of the role of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB).

### Workers' Control and Workplace Occupations.

The exercise by workers of significant levels of control over their workplace can be roughly divided into two types: those which had the aim of transforming control and those which aimed at resolving other issues

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1. All chapter head quotes are reiterations of the outlines of chapters contained in the introductory chapter - pages 9 - 20.

within the confines of existing structures of ownership and control[1]. Into the first category we would place the developments of control through "soviets" in Russia (1905,1917); "councils of workers and soldiers" in Germany and Hungary (1918-19); the "collectivisation" of industry in Catalonia during the Spanish Civil War; the elements of "popular control" exercised in Chile following the election of Allende in 1970, and the seizure of farms and workplaces during Portugal's "national-democratic revolution" (1974-75)[2].

Into the second category we would place a number of workplace occupations which are discussed in detail below.

The United States.

The earliest occupations: One of the earliest recorded occupations was at the steel plants at Homestead, Pennsylvania, in 1892. Workers seized the plants during company attempts to introduce wage cuts, and were met with armed violence in the shape of three hundred Pinkerton agents: thirty four workers were killed[3], the workers were defeated and union membership declined[4].

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1. This division is not unproblematic. Certain soviets may not have started out with the aim of social revolution and, on the other hand, some occupation situations may have developed into revolutionary seizures, i.e., Italy, 1920. It is enough here to draw a line between control over certain workplaces alone and control over broader aspects of social life.

2. Cf. on Russia - E.H.Carr, 1971; I.Deutscher, 1954, 1968; J.Reed, 1970; and A.Rothstein, 1950.
   Germany - E.Anderson, 1945 and A.Oliveira, 1942.
   Spain - A.H.Landis, 1973, and G.Orwell, 1968.
   Chile - K.Clark, 1972.
   Portugal - A.Cunhal, 1975; G.Green, 1976; C.Mendes, 1974a,b; and the 'Sunday Times Insight Team', 1975.

3. Cf. S.Lens, 1974, p.8; B.Minton and J.Stuart, 1937, pp.221-224; and P.Renshaw, 1967, pp.139-140.

4. The union was the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers.

The next occupation ended in victory. In 1901 striking metal miners occupied their mines because the company[1] had introduced a new pay system which made it difficult to earn three dollars for an eight-hour shift. The action had begun as a strike but was weakened by the sixth week by the introduction of blackleg labour. At this point the strikers used armed force to regain control of the (Smuggler-Union) mine. The company gave in shortly after and an agreement was drawn up with the union[2] guaranteeing a three dollar a day minimum wage[3].

The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW): The IWW were the driving force behind many stay-in and slow-down strikes over the next few years, begining with a sit-down at the Schenectady plant of the General Electric Company in 1906. This was no accident and reflected the founding principles of the IWW. Founded in Chicago in 1905 its political ideology was largely syndicalist[4]. It was formed to win workers to "industrial unionism" and to organise for the winning of political power through a general strike.

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1. Telluride of Colorado.

2. The Western Federation of Miners (WFM).

3. Cf. S.Lens, 1974; B.Minton and J.Stuart, 1937, and P.Renshaw,1967.
   A significant factor in the winning of the strike was the nature of the union and the local leadership involved. The WFM pursued a militant policy which reflected the violent spirit of life in Western mining camps. Almost all of its strikes were met by violence from armed company guards and state militia which the union, as at Telluride, met in kind.
   The union won many tough battles over the next decade and as a result grew from 15 locals in 5 states to 200 in 13 states, Alaska and Canada. The secretary-treasurer, Big Bill Haywood and the Telluride leader, Vincent St.John went on to play leading roles in the establishment of the IWW.

4. Several of the early leaders later joined the Communist Party of the USA.

At the founding Congress the question of the revolutionary general strike was debated. As the seconder of the motion, Lucy Parsons, put it,

"My conception of the strike of the future is not to strike and go out and starve but to strike and remain in and take possession of the necessary property of production. If anyone is to starve . . . let it be the capitalist class" (1).

The motion was carried and the concept of the workplace occupation was carried forward into the thinking of the American labour movement.

Just over a year after the congress the IWW had enrolled tens of thousands of workers including three thousand of General Electric's seventeen thousand employees at the Schenectady complex. When the company fired three of them workers at the power plant pulled the switches. However, instead of leaving the factory the IWW members and other sympathetic employees sat down at their benches. They held on for sixty-five hours before achieving their aim[2].

Variations on the occupation theme were also employed. In 1910 women garment workers ceased operations without leaving the shops[3], and in 1917 IWW lumber workers took similar action: instead of labouring a full ten hours a day they stopped work at the end of eight or would slow down operations so that they did eight hours work spread over ten. The lumber workers won an eight-hour day through this action[4].

Between 1908 and 1911 the IWW had made some progress and had brought unionism to industries previously considered unorganisable. Internationally IWW unionism developed in Austrailia, Britain, Canada,

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1. P.Renshaw, 1967, p.85.
2. S.Lens, 1974, p.180.
3. B.Minton and J.Stuart, 1937, p.221.
4. S.Lens, op cit, p.194.

Chile, Ireland and Norway. However, a series of defeats, attacks on the leadership and imprisonment and division in the ranks with the development of communism helped to knock the heart out of the organisation by the mid-1920s. By the late 1920s the organisation remained alive in legend only and workplace occupations had not been used since the pre-First World-War era; they were not to be seen again in the USA until the early 1930s and the mass sit-down strikes.

The importance of the IWW lies in the fact that not only were they influential in developing the sit-down strike in the early part of the century but they were influential in its revival two decades later. It has been claimed, with some truth, that when the tactic reappeared in the early 1930s it had been "stumbled on almost inadvertently"[1] and that, "There was no specific person who could claim exclusive invention of the tactic; it was an action which flowed naturally from circumstances" (2). Certainly it would be difficult to show that sit-downs in the begining of the period were directly due to the efforts of radical-left militants. Nonetheless, it would be equally wrong to assume that such actions were entirely spontaneous. There is sufficient indications that the IWW was influential both in terms of ideas and in leadership in the development of the sit-down tactic in the 1930s.

"Far more than any other pioneer labor organisation, the IWW laid the groundwork for the great organizing drives undertaken by the CIO among the unskilled and foreign-born in the mass production industries during the 1930s and 1940s" (3).

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1. B.Minton and J.Stuart, 1937, p.211.

2. S.Lens, 1974, p.355. The explanation is that outside pickets, during the 1933-35 strike waves, had been beaten and arrested, maimed, and killed in large numbers. Thus the thought "occurred to many unionists that it would be infinitely easier on their skulls and their nostrils to stay inside" during a strike.

3. P.Renshaw, 1967, p.267. (CIO refers to the Committee for Industrial Organisations).

The "groundwork" included introducing radical union traditions into those industries[1]. The IWW had, for instance, been influential among car, maritime and rubber workers. Prior to the 1930s,

"Job-action strikes had occurred countless times in industry - the "quickees" of the maritime workers were similar in intent, as were the "skipees" of the auto workers who when speedup became too intense would just neglect to work on one out of five cars that passed the line. But not until 1936 when rubber workers began to sit down was this strategy used with widespread effectiveness . . ."(2).

It is true that the IWW had little lasting organisational success in those industries in which the CIO were to become established but they did do some important groundwork and many of its members survived to play a direct organisational role in the CIO.

The mass sit-down strikes of the 1930s.

As the IWW was reaching its last days America was enjoying something of boom period. In 1929, however, the Wall Street crash ended the "American dream" of many and a new economic crisis rapidly developed. By the time

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1. In 1909 the IWW gained the leadership of the Pressed Steel Car plant strike at McKees Rock, Pittsburgh. This led to the establishment of the Car Builders' Industrial Union with a membership of three thousand. In 1912 the IWW took over the leadership of a strike at a rubber concern in Akron, Ohio. In both cases the CIO were to be active years later.

2. B.Minton and J.Stuart, 1937, p.211.

3. Men such as John Panzer who joined the IWW in 1905 and organised among the lumberjacks of the Far West and the metal miners of the Mesabi range. In 1933 he joined the United Auto Workers (UAW) and became an organiser for them during the violent struggles which established industrial unionism in the auto industry.

   "Men like Panzer brought with them into the CIO the experience they had learned in years of organising with the IWW. Wobbly* strike techniques - in particular the sit-down strike - were used with great effect by CIO unions a generation later" (P.Renshaw, 1967, pp.267-8. *The term "wobbly" is an affectionate name for IWW members, AJM).

   Ralph Chaplin, who wrote many of the IWW songs, was also an active CIO member, and an IWW organiser in Akron in 1912 later became a CIO organiser in the 1930s.

Franklin D. Roosevelt took office in 1933 America was racked by the blackest panic in its history.

"Bank failures, which had commenced several months before in the rural areas, had so spread to the larger institutions that state after state declared bank holidays. To avoid financial disaster, the first act of the incoming president was to extend the holiday nationally.

Moreover, production had sunk by March 1933 to about half the 1929 peak and to below even the worst level reached in the 1920-22 depression. Especially had heavy industries suffered: the index for steel and iron output had fallen by 85%; for lumber by 77%; for cement by 65%., Decreases had been proportional in other basic industries and only slightly less severe for those industries producing consumption goods. Agriculture was paralyzed. Foreign trade had slumped disastrously"(1).

This was the background against which a spate of sit-down strikes occurred. The new Roosevelt administration responded to the crisis through a mishmash of neo-Keynesian and State capitalist measures, euphemistically called "New Deal". Nonetheless, some concession was made to the trade unions with the introduction of Section 7-A of the National Industrial Recovery Act (NRA) which admitted the right of labour to organise into trade unions and to engage in collective bargaining[2].

A new militant mood was speeping through sections of American labour. Working class votes had helped bring Roosevelt to power at a time when seventeen million were unemployed and when wages had fallen by half along side a thirty percent fall in the cost of living[3].

"Workers expressed their disgust and desperation through spontaneous strikes; through unemployment demonstrations that grew more militant and more insistent; through hunger marches that converged on state capitals and on Washington with alarming frequency; through farmer revolts that were characterized by an ugly bitterness" (4).

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1. B.Minton and J.Stuart, 1937, p.203.
2. Ibid. Section 7-A was later replaced by the Wagner Labor Relations Act.
3. Ibid, p.204.
4. Ibid.

Ironically, as the crisis grew the American trade union movement stood weak and with a leadership incapable of responding. Only ten percent of American workers were organised and largely into AFL[1] unions. This meant that the majority of workers were unable to benefit from the NRA codes which allowed for trade union recognition and compelled employers to negotiate. Infact, the AFL leadership discouraged workers from attempting to benefit from the NRA[2]. In this critical situation there was a void in labour leadership but,

"If the AFL hierarchy could not stir itself to change policies of organization . . . there were thousands of young radicals ready and willing to do so. As the wheels of industry began to get rolling again under New Deal ministrations, laborers in turn regained a measure of self-confidence, and began to organize on their own - or under the leadership of Communists, Socialists, Trotskyites and Lovestonites. This time their efforts would not be in vain" (3).

The radicals played not only key roles but brought with them radical ideas. They were to play a key role in the unemployment demonstrations[4] and provided leadership to the many strikes of the period[5].

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1. The American Federation of Labor.

2. B.Minton and J.Stuart, 1937, p.205.

3. S.Lens, 1974, p.282.

4. On March 6th 1930 the communists led a national demonstration for "Work or Wages" which attracted almost 1 million workers in more than a dozen cities. (S.Lens, 1974, p.280).

5. During 1934 a wave of strikes swept America involving half a million textile workers along the eastern seaboard, teamsters in Minneapolis, meat packers in Iowa, silk-dye workers in Peterson, taxi-drivers in New York, rubber workers in Akron and longshoremen on the Gulf. In the latter case the leadership included pro-communist Harry Bridges and the communists paper - the 'Western Worker' - was adopted as the official organ of the strikers. Another of the leaders was Harry Lunderberg who had previously been an IWW member.
Cf. S.Lens,op cit, p.301; B.Minton and J.Stuart, op cit, p.185.

They were also to the fore in the mass sit-downs in the automobile industry. Wyndham Mortimer, the first vice-president of the UAW, was a communist sympathiser who master minded the sit-down strategy against General Motors in 1936.

"Mortimer was fortunate that there were a sizeable number of communists in the UAW he could rely on, as well as Trotskyites and socialists . . . The leftist movements in the country were then on the upswing. The Communist Party had grown . . . to 41,000 in 1936, with perhaps a million additional sympathisers and friends. There were, then, many leftists constantly in and out of the plants, just waiting to be called on to express their sentiments, and Mortimer, with his own radical ties, was able to engage their services" (1).

Mortimer utilised the radicals to sell UAW newspapers outside the car plants. Inside key plants he organised small groups of radicals that he could rely on to effect the strategy he had planned. At one plant (Fisher One) he formed a union nucleus of three communist sympathisers. At another plant (Chevrolet Number Four) Kermit Johnson, a Trotskyite, was to play a leading role in the sit-down there. Also playing key roles were the Reuther brothers Roy, Victor and Walter who were left-wing members of the Socialist Party[2].

Radicals were also active in the rubber industry where the CIO sent in left-wing organisers in the shape of socialist McAlister Coleman, and Socialist Party members Powers Hapgood and Leo Krzycki.

The United Rubber Workers: A short sit-down had occurred in the auto industry as early as 1934. However, auto workers did not remain in a

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1. S.Lens, 1974, p.348.

2. In 1932 Walter and Victor had worked their way around the world and at one point worked at Soviet car plants in Gorky. Walter, in fact, became a brigade leader in charge of 14 young Soviet workers; teaching them tool and die making. (B.Minton and J.Stuart, 1937, p.219).

   Other young radicals involved in the sit-downs were Dave Miller and Shelton Tappes; both of whom I interviewed in Detroit in November, 1976 on which some of this section is based. Miller had been an active socialist in Britain before leaving for the USA in 1920. His brother-in-law was the famous British communist Bob Stewart.

factory for more than the duration of a day until late in 1936. It was left to the rubber workers to pioneer the use of the sit-down on a large scale.

At the onset of the 1930s the rubber industry had instituted intense speedup of work. Workers were "burned out" under the pressure by the time they were forty and the industry experienced a rapid growth in unemployment[1]. Several attempts to unionise the workers had failed due to company attacks on union organisers. It was only after the passing of the NRA that the drive for unionism was renewed.

The rubber industry was one of the very first to be tackled by the new CIO body[2]. At the begining of 1936 two brief sit-downs occurred at Goodyear and the Goodrich factories at Akron. The action that was to

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1. The 75,000 employees of Akron had been reduced to 40,000 in the years 1920-36, while production had been doubled over the period. (B.Minton and J.Stuart, 1936, p.207).

2. A small number of unions had attempted to steer the AFL on a recruitment drive in the mass production industries. This was rejected at the 1934 AFL convention and with its rejection at the 1935 convention eight large unions formed the CIO. This led to a split but saw the rapid unionisation of the mass production industries.
   In 1933 unionisation at Akron had mushroomed but the AFL leadership had ordered that membership should be divided out between the relevant craft unions. In January 1934 a few militants rebelled at this and held a convention to establish an industrial union for rubber workers. The AFL expelled the militants involved and the Tyre companies stepped up company unionism. Several strike actions that ended in defeat as AFL officials capitulated to company demands with the result that union membership fell dramatically.
   A few progressives stuck together to keep some form of organisation intact and in September 1935 the AFL leadership granted them a charter, but as something short of an industrial organisation; it had been granted on condition that the AFL man, Claherty, be accepted as the President of the new United Rubber Workers. This was rejected by the membership along with an attempt to expell CP and IWW members from the URW. Instead the union affiliated to the new CIO.
   Cf. B.Minton and J.Stuart, op cit, p.210.

spark off a whole series of others, however, came at the town's Firestone plant that same month (January).

Speedup was increasing and at Firestone workers responded by forcibly making a pace setter slow down. A foreman intervened, a fight resulted and a union man was sacked. The workers demanded his reinstatement and when the company refused they halted the machines and waited fpr the company to concede. It was the first major occupation in the industry and it ended after only three days with the reinstatement of the sacked worker and payment of wages for time lost during the action. Membership of the URW grew by four to five hundred members.

The next battle came at the Goodyear plant. The company announced in October 1935 that it was going to abandon NRA standards and lengthen the six-hour day to eight. The company union voted against these measures but their protest was overruled by the company President; the company union was revealed as impotent. The URW responded by staging three sit-downs in different departments and won a temporary postponement of the lengthened day. In February the company began enactment of the policy and when one hundred and thirty seven workers refused to work the extra time they were sacked. An immediate strike began and using mass picketing the URW managed to close down all Goodyear plants within three days. The CIO swung all its organisational and financial support behind the Goodyear strikers. After four weeks the company agreed to recognise the URW, reinstate the sacked workers and revert back to the six-hour day.

The Goodyear victory swelled the URW local there by over four thousand new members; there had only been four hundred prior to the strike. Workers returned to the factories with the slogan, "Take the picket line

back to the factories"[1]. They did. Under the impact of the Firestone and Goodyear victories no fewer than one hundred and eighty sit-down strikes took place in the period February 1936 - March 1937. In virtually every case the URW won and membership grew to fourty thousand.

The United Auto Workers: With victory in its nostrils the CIO now turned its attention towards the steel industry. A CIO official, Phil Murray, was put in charge of the campaign with funds to employ four hundred and thirty-three full and part-time organisers[2]. The CIO's pivotal struggle, however, was to occur in the auto industry begining in November 1936[3].

The success of the rubber workers influenced the rank-and-file in the automobile industry. Auto workers faced identical problems of speedup, wage cuts and unemployment[4]. Attempts at unionising the industry had a similar history also. The UAW began with an upsurge of members

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1. B.Minton and J.Stuart, 1936, p.212.

2. Murray employed mostly communists, trotskites and socialists.

3. In the meantime sit-down strikes had begun to be used successfully by labourers at the Hormel packinghouse in Austin, Minnesota and by UAW members at the Bendix plant in South Bend, Michigan; at Midland Steel and at Kelsey-Hayes in Detroit, and at the Hercules Motor works in Canton, Ohio. Cf. S.Lens, 1974, pp. 351, 355; H.Beynon, 1973, p.33.

4. A workforce of 435,000 auto workers in 1928 had been reduced to 244,000 by 1933, and pay checks had been reduced from a peak of thirty-three dollars a week to just over twenty. (S.Lens, op cit, p.343).
   Descriptions of car workers of the time refer to men returning home at night looking "so tired like they were dead". Thirty year olds looked more like fifty. The work pace was so furious, in fact, that during a heat wave in July 1936, with a temperature of 100 plus degrees for a full week, scores of workers died and hundreds more were hospitalised. (S.Lens, op cit, pp. 342-3).

in response to worsening conditions but faced a series of strikes which were thwarted by AFL leaders. It then remained relatively inactive until its second convention in 1936 where the membership rejected the AFL leadership, replaced them with militants and affiliated to the CIO.

The automobile industry at this time was dominated by three giant corporations: General Motors, marketing forty-three and a half percent of all cars sold in 1934; Ford, with twenty-eight percent; and Chrysler with twenty-two percent[1]. The new vice-president of the UAW decided that if the union was to grow and win recognition then it had to take on General Motors first. The plan was to concentrate efforts at two plants, Fisher Body Number One in Flint, Michigan and at the Fisher Body plant in Cleveland,Ohio.

In November 1936 the plan was facilitated when supervisors at Fisher Number One cut a three-man crew to two. The three involved staged a protest sit-down strike and were sacked. This led to a further sit-down involving several hundred workers. The UAW went on to negotiate the immediate reinstatement of the sacked workers and, as in Akron, the new union began to take on a large number of new members.

The following month a sit-down occurred at the Cleveland Fisher plant. The company had arranged a meeting with the union to discuss wage-cutting grievances but then postponed it. This triggered off a sharp reaction from the workforce who immediately began a plant wide sit-down strike. Shortly after trouble spread to the plants at Flint. An attempt to move dies from the Fisher Number One plant met with a sit-down action. A few hours later Fisher Two was occupied over the transfer of two employees. Rapidly sit-downs and traditional strikes spread throughout

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1. B.Minton and J.Stuart, 1937, p.213.

General Motors: on December 31st a sit-down took place at GM's Guide Lamp plant in Anderson, Indiana, followed by actions at Toledo-Chevrolet, and two Janesville-Fisher plants in Detroit. By January 11th 1937 three-quarters of all GM's manual workforce were idle[1].

At an early stage the company attempted to use the force of law to evict workers from the occupied factories. Not only did this fail to scare off the strikers but the case had to be delayed for three weeks because the union were able to expose the fact that the presiding judge, Edward D.Black, owned thousands of GM shares[2]. Recourse to the law did not impress the strikers in a company noted for its widespread use of company spies. As CIO leader, John L. Lewis, put it,'it came with ill grace for a corporation which was itself violating the Wagner Act to talk about the illegal acts of others'[3].

Towards the middle of the month the company resorted to violence. They turned off the heating at Fisher Two and prevented food supplies getting through to the strikers. Company police massed in preparation to evict the strikers. On the 11th armed police attempting to prevent food supplies from reaching the strikers were met with coping tiles and four-pound door hinges thrown from the roof. The local sheriff's car was overturned with him in it and the police wounded fourteen people; some

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1. Cf. S.Lens, 1974; B.Minton and J.Stuart, 1937; R.Rosewall, 1971; W.Cahn, 1972 and W.W.Pflug, 1971.

2. He owned 219,000 dollars worth. His situation was in violation of section 13888 of the Michigan legal code which prohibited a judge from participating in "any case or proceeding in which he is party or in which he is interested".

3. S.Lens, 1974, p.359.

seriously. The battle was won when the strikers' wives and other GM workers joined the picket line. The police, now greatly outnumbered and facing the prospect of firing on women, withdrew.

The battle was won but a fierce war raged over the following month. The Governor of Michigan called in the National Guard and at one point union officials and pickets were cleared from two occupied plants and machine-gun emplacements set up. A propaganda war was waged against the strikers through the establishment of an anti-strike organisation called the Flint Alliance. On the strikers' side the wives formed a "Women's Auxiliary" with the aim of sustaining the morale of the strikers, assisting families in difficulty, and helping to patrol picket lines. Within this organisation there was a para-military core called the Emergency Brigade made up of those prepared to do battle to defend the sit-downs: these wore red berets and armbands and carried long wooden clubs.

Meanwhile GM steadfastly refused to negotiate. The difficulty for the UAW lay in the fact that the sit-downs were not biting hard enough. What was needed was control of the Number Four plant which produced engines for all the American Chevrolets. The UAW's planning committee told a few trusted men to occupy the plant on the change of shift on February 1st. To provide a diversion they told another group of members, which included known informers, to occupy Number Nine plant. The tactic worked. The informers informed and the company prepared to defend Number Nine. A fierce battle ensued involving many of the company's police force. Meanwhile, after a bitter struggle, Number Four was occupied and shortly afterwards the company conceded. They agreed to recognise the UAW, to

pay wage increases and not to discriminate against militant strikers. The agreement was to apply to the seventeen plants at which sit-downs had occurred. Immediately following this settlement a further eighteen sit-downs took place in GM plants as new groups of workers attempted to gain the new benefits. Over the next months a further eighty-seven sit-downs occurred in the Detroit Area alone[1].

Having achieved victory against GM the union forged ahead to organise the rest of the motor industry. In rapid succession Studebaker, Reo, Hudson and Nash signed agreements with the UAW. Chrysler resisted. Towards the Autumn of 1937 fifty-nine thousand Chrysler workers staged sit-downs and this spread to other company plants. Eventually Chrysler yielded to UAW tactics.

The success of the URW and the UAW encouraged a spate of workers to become unionised and to emulate the successful sit-down strike tactic[2]. Despite this, however, the CIO leader, John L.Lewis, put an end to the use of the sit-down strike by CIO members towards the end of the 1930s. Lewis had always been "philosophically opposed to the seizure of capitalist property"[3] but had not moved in the early days because he could see the importance of the sit-down in the development of the CIO.

America was to be "free" of workplace occupations for almost forty years until the early 1970s when lumber workers turned their works into a co-operative and brewery workers at the Rheingold brewery, New York, occupied it to prevent its closure.

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1. Interview with Dave Miller and Shelton Tappes, Detroit, 1976. Cf also R.Rosewall, 1971.

2. Between 1935-37 over 2,000 sit-downs occurred including dime-store employees, Western Union messengers, glass blowers, hotel workers and garbage collectors. Cf. S.Lens, 1974, p.372.

3. Ibid, p.359.

Italy.

In crisis: As with various other European nations Italy was in serious economic trouble at the approach of 1920[1]. The general economic crisis was reflected in a rapidly increasing cost of living particularly with regard to food stuffs. The workers responded with growing unionisation and strikes[2]. Among the successful strike actions of the period were those conducted by the Federazione Italiana Operai Metallurgici (FIOM) which, in February 1919, resulted in the achievement of the eight-hour day for metal workers. That same year the Socialist Party (PSI) experienced a wave of recruitment and won 1,834,000 votes in the following general election[3]. Also at this time the Confederazione Generale del Lavoro (CGL), one of Italy's biggest union federations, supported an international general strike in solidarity with the workers of Soviet Russia and Hungary[4].

The workers' response: One of the oldest political groupings in Italy has been the anarcho-syndicalists and as early as 1912 there had been a 'revolutionary syndicalist union federation', the Unione Sindicale Italiana (USI). This experienced a rapid growth after the

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1. Production of grain had fallen to 45 million quintals by 1919 and was to fall to 38 million the following year: prior to the war it had been at 52 million. Maize production in 1919 was down from 25 to 22 million. Imports of food accounted for 40% of the trade deficit as a result. Industrial production was also down: by 15% in mining, 40% in engineering and 20% in chemicals. (P.Spriano, 1964, pp.42-43).

2. In 1920 there were 1,881 strikes involving 1,267,953 workers, resulting in the 'loss' of 16,398,277 working days - the highest figure ever recorded at that time. (Ibid).

3. Ibid, p.25.

4. Ibid, p.31.

war and was claiming eight hundred thousand supporters by 1920[1]. The socialists were also experiencing rapid growth and included among their number a revolutionary group called the ordinovisti[2]. This latter group played an important part in the development of a 'factory council movement'[3]. The radical influence in the country was to be an important factory in the development of mass occupations during this period.

In 1920 several strikes and factory occupations occurred as protests against the fast falling living standard. The first of the occupations occurred at the Mazzonis cotton-mills in the Canavese in February, followed by the shipyards of Ansaldo, Odero, Piaggio, Ilva and San Giorgio and, in March, at the Miani-Silvestri plants in Naples. These were all defeated[4].

The mass occupations: As 1920 progressed the economic crisis grew worse. In May the FIOM began negotiations with the main employers' federation, the Association of Metallurgical, Mechanical and Affiliated Industrialists (AMMA). The Union was concerned to increase piecework rates by fifty percent in steel and forty percent in other industries, and to win an increase of the same order for basic pay. In addition

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1. P.Spriano, 1964, p.26.

2. Ibid, p.28.

3. Workers in Turin had developed factory councils at their place of work during this period. They were bodies which shifted the focus of organisation inside the factory in a way that was designed to place power into the hands of the rank-and-file and direct negotiations away from union officialdom. In April 1920 Turin metalworkers went on strike over the principle of recognition of factory councils. Other workers came out in support and a city-wide strike lasted 10 days. It lacked national support, however, and went down in defeat: the FIOM had regarded the development as anarcho-syndicalist and did not lend support.

4. The Sestri Ponente dockyard occupations were ended within a few days by large scale police action and in Naples harsh repression was used against the 1,800 Miani-Silvestri workers. (Spriano, op cit,pp.32-33).

they wanted a cost of living bonus, increased percentages for overtime and night work, twelve days' paid holiday per year and new rates of compensation for dismissal[1]. The employers were in a mood to fight. They argued that any increase in wage rates would add to production costs at a time when the economic crisis was deepening and Italian firms were becoming less competitive.

The FIOM responded by arguing that the economic crisis case was being overplayed by AMMA and that many of their member firms had made exceptional profits. Beyond this it was not for the workers to bear the burden of the crisis on their shoulders alone. The USI went further. They stated that it was not for workers to take account of conditions in industry but to defend the purchasing power of their wages. If the employers were claiming that they could not handle the situation then they should stand aside and let the workers take over[2].

The battle lines were drawn but what action to take? The FIOM felt that the very seriousness of the economic situation compelled them to devise a form of action which would be as damaging as possible to the employers but least costly for the workers[3]. At an extraordinary congress in August FIOM decided on a policy of 'obstructionism' from the 21st of the month; in effect a 'go slow'. The USI, whose members were also involved, felt that this type of action was inadequate but fell into line'in order not to divide the forces of the working class'[4].

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1. P.Spriano, 1964, pp.40-41.
2. Ibid, p.42.
3. Ibid, p.45.
4. The USI did not believe that the go-slow tactic would last long before the employers resorted to lock-outs. It prepared its members for this eventuality by advocating factory occupations should lock-out be threatened. Even within the 'moderate' FIOM there were other sections which also favoured the immediate occupation of the factories. (Ibid, p.46).

Between the 24th-30th of August attitudes hardened and the action of some employers led to sit-down strikes. All work at the Milan Romeo plant was suspended on the 24th and a week later the two thousand workers were locked out and the factory was patrolled by armed guards. This was the trigger for a spate of occupations and attempted lock-outs. It is debatable if the Romeo action was merely an individual employer's response or part of the general plan of the federation. Whatever, when the Milan section of FIOM heard of the lock-out it ordered its members to occupy their factories[1]. That same evening the central committee of FIOM, meeting in Turin, voted to commend the energetic behavoiur of the Milan section, and warned the employers that they would 'authorize their members to resort to every measure of defence against the new oppression which the employers are contemplating'[2].

The employers were also meeting that day - in Milan. They decided that all federated members should 'move to a closure of factories in a manner to be decided by individual consortia'[3]. The executive council of AMMA decided to begin a lock-out that night in Turin. The battle had taken a new turn.

In Rome a lock-out was already underway so metalworkers moved to seize control of the capital's metal works. Over the next few days

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1. That is, over 300 metallurgic factories in and around Milan. (P.Spriano, 1964, pp.51-52.

2. Ibid, p.53.

3. Ibid, p.55. 'The occupation (tactic) . . . did not turn out to be wholly undesirable to the industrialists, to whom it gave an opportunity to stop unprofitable production and to throw on to agitators the blame for what they themselves wanted, but did not dare to do'.

the lock-out was proclaimed virtually everywhere and was promptly met with worker occupations.[1] By September 4th the vast majority of metal-workers had occupied their factories. Over four hundred thousand were directly involved and the total grew to half a million when, in some places, workers in other industries occupied their factories in solidarity[2].

Once the occupations began many went beyond the economistic ends that they had set out upon. There was a feeling in some factories that occupation should signal the beginning of a revolutionary process to achieve full workers' control. Infact, many left leaders, including many members of the Comintern[3], felt that such a process was already under way. But it was not to be. The occupations had begun as a defensive measure against lock-outs, arising out of a wage claim, and when the employers offered to settle on favourable terms the unions accepted.

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1. In part the employers hoped that the lock-out would press the Government to intervene in the dispute; the union also had the same hope - but intervention to their advantage.

2. In Turin, Milan and Genoa hundreds of thousands were involved. In many places political slogans appeared on occupied factory walls, political speakers addressed workers in these factories and left-wing flags and symbols flew from the buildings:

"The red flag rose over the naval dockyard of Palermo and the red and black flag of the anarchists over the roofs of Verona . . . In Rome at the Tabanelli, the Soviet emblem was raised over the factory entrance."

At the Fatme plant, "In every corner, there were slogans clearly socialist in inspiration: he who does not work shall not eat; honour and labour, our objective; chains and fetters we break; we want not wealth but freedom".

In Turin an inventory of production was called for by the workers with the purpose of a "possible direct trade with Soviet Russia".

At Fiat the workers would answer the telephone with the words, "This is the Fiat Soviet".

"All along the line from Sampierdarena to Voltri, there (was) a lavish display of red and black flags hoisted over machines, gates, ships under construction. On the great gate of the Ansalso shop in Sestri Ponente there (was) a placard, "Communist Factory" ".

"In many factories there were meetings. The most famous socialist leaders, young and old, spoke to assemlies: Gramsci at Garrone Fiat*, Pagella and Pastore at Fiat-Centro, Tasca at the Ansaldo yards and Fiat-Brevetti*, Montagnana and Boero at Savigliano, Togliatti at Dubosc*. (*All members of the ordinovisti group). P.Spriano,1964,pp.62-65.

3. Short for the Communist Third International.

On 19th September, fearing that the situation could become revolutionary if allowed to continue, the parties involved were summoned to Rome by the Prime Minister to conduct negotiations. After only six hours general agreement was reached. It was a notable success for FIOM in trade union terms, with a four lire a day pay increase, cost of living bonuses, percentages for overtime, six days paid holidays and compensation for dismissal[1]. An FIOM referendum produced a majority in favour of acceptance and this was followed by the ending of the mass occupations[2].

On the surface the workers had won a great victory albeit within the confines of capitalism. But the occupations had opened up new horizons for many of those involved and to the extent that "the union rank-and-file felt, in a confused way, that they had been defeated"[3]. It has been argued that the limited social victory of the occupations was a temporary gain and that by the lack of consolidation of events during and after the actions that it contributed to a weakening of the Italian workers in the face of the rise of fascism[4].

By early 1921 many metal workers faced massive sackings. The trade union movement increasingly came under attack and by 1922 fascism had taken a powerful hand in Italian affairs. This led to the smashing of Italian trade unionism for two decades and the use of the occupation tactic for a further three decades.

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1. P.Spriano, 1964, p.106.

2. The first returns on 25th September showed 127,904 in favour and 44,531 against the agreement. Only in Turin was the 'yes' vote a narrow one with 18,740 for and 16,909 against. (Ibid, p.122).

3. Statement by A.Borghi, USI secretary. Quoted in Spriano, p.126.

4. Cf. Spriano, Chapter 10. He quotes G.de Rosa,

"The workers' movement emerged from this struggle enervated and disillusioned. The factory owners swore never to forgive the workers for the offence done to their rights as proprietors . . . From this situation, fascsim soon 'took courage'. It exploited the weariness of the workers and the thirst for

The Post-War era: In 1975 Italian workers, in common with other European workers, found themselves confronted with yet another crisis. Once again, in the face of raging inflation and high unemployment, they resorted to the use of the occupation tactic - by now in general use throughout Western Europe.

Towards the Autumn workers at Ranco Controls, Milan and at the Ingersoll-Rand subsidiary, Genoa occupied their factories in the wake of redundancies. In September workers at Singer, Turin took similar action and later that month car workers facing lay-offs and closures occupied the Alfa Romeo and Innocenti plants in Milan[1].

Milan, Turin and Genoa were not new to factory occupations, being key centres fifty-five years earlier. And, yet again car workers were to the fore: the Romeo plant once again playing an historic role[2].

Spain.

Revolutionary seizures of factories reached a high point in Spain during the Civil War: the factories were largely taken over by workers and run by committees of the Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) union federation[3]. Other seizures had occurred prior to this, however, and bore

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1. The Innocenti plant, owned by the British Leyland Company, faced closure with the loss of 1,700 jobs. The occupation which followed lasted 132 days, during which time it received wide support from industrial and professional workers in Milan and the rest of Italy. At one stage a protest demonstration attracted 100,000 workers from the region. Internationally, several British BLMC plants had already been occupied and so the Milan occupation leaders sent a delegation to Britain to enlist the support of their workforces. Eventually the Milan workers won a reprieve.

2. Between the mass occupations in Italy (1920) and America (1936) the occupation tactic was used by railwaymen in Britain and coal miners in Britain, Pecs (Hungary), Terbovlye (Yugoslavia) and Katowice (Poland), by copper miners in Huelva (Spain) and by engineering workers in France. Cf. S.Lens, 1974, p.355; D.Pickles, 1938, pp.121-142; A.Horner, 1960, pp.131-33; K.Knowles, 1954.

3. G.Woodcock, 1962, p.365.

the same hallmarks of anarchism[1].

The CNT was formed under the influence of anarchist leadership who from the begining regarded it as a revolutionary weapon[2]. By 1919, at the Madrid Congress, the CNT had an estimated seven hundred thousand members, mostly in Catalonia, Andalusia, Levante, and Galicia[3].

In 1923 the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera came to power and the following year the CNT was dissolved and its newspaper suppressed. From now on the CNT had to work clandestinely until the fall of the dictatorship six years later in 1930.

The Republic: Shortly after the fall of de Rivera the King departed following victories for the anti-monarchists in the municipal elections of 1931. Spain was now a Republic with a Government to some extent supported by the Left. Regardless, the CNT led a series of strikes that year in Madrid, Seville and Barcelona, and the Federation of the Iberian Anarchists (FAI) attempted to forcibly take control of the Madrid Central Telephone building.

Early in 1932 the FAI led an uprising in the Llobregat valley in Catelonia in an attempt to divide up a number of large estates among

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1. Anarchism has a long history in Spain dating back to the 1840s. Anarcho-syndicalism dates back to the turn of the twentieth century and was inspired by developments in France and the success of the Confederation Generale de Travail (CGT). A spanish anarcho-syndicalist trade union - the CNT - was established in 1910 in the wake of a general strike.

2. "The enthusiasm generated by the founding of the C.N.T. led to an immediate revival of anarchism in the rural areas of Andalusia and to a wave of strikes elsewhere. A spectacular general strike in Saragossa developed into an armed uprising . . . At Cullera, near Valencia, the striking workers declared the town a commune independent of Spain, a procedure which in later years was to be imitated by village insurrectionaries in many parts of the southern provinces." (G.Woodcock, 1962,p.351).

3. "As the most influential revolutionary organization in Spain, the C.N.T. was assiduously courted by the newly founded Communist (Third) International". (Ibid, p.352).

the peasants. The Government reacted by brutally suppressing the uprising and deporting without trial leading anarchists. Little attempt was made to deal with the burning problem of land reform. Industrially, the CNT responded with a series of strikes throughout the country, reaching a climax in December (1933) when they staged an uprising in Aragon which involved attempts at land collectivization and factory occupations in Saragossa. This was to last four days[1].

Politically the occupations were preceeded by a vigorous abstentionist campaign during the November election when,

"The lack of the million votes which it controlled meant defeat for the Left and two years of reactionary right-wing government", (2).

This action helps reflect on the nature of the CNT factory seizures in Catalonia, Andalusia, Levante and Galicia during the Civil War. In Germany that year Adolf Hitler had become Chancellor and Austria had been prevented from taking a reactionary road only by the intervention of armed resistance from progressive forces[3]. Soon it was to be the turn of Spain.

Towards the end of 1934 it took armed action and a wave of strikes to prevent a rightist coup in Spain: and yet the FAI and the CNT stayed out of the struggle[4]. In January 1936 a new general election was called and one week later, in the face of growing reaction throughout Europe, the Socialists and Communists joined forces along with the Left Republicans and the Republican Union to form a Frente Popular. On February 16th the

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1. G.Woodcock, 1962, pp.361-363.
2. Ibid, p.363.
3. Cf. A.H.Landis, 1975, p.38; G.E.R.Gedye, 1939.
4. S.Lens, 1974, pp.39-61.

election resulted in a victory for the Frente Popular[1].

Although the CNT[2] had lent its vote to the Popular Front it acted as if there was no essential difference between the new Government and the previous governments of the Right. They, in fact, fought even harder against the Frente Popular[3] and particularly during the Civil War when they embarked upon a number of harmful actions including the seizure of factories. Such actions succeeded for a time in splitting the Republican forces and diverting their energies. Unlike many other occupation situations the actions of the CNT during the Civil War objectively hastened the onset of fascism which put an end to trade unionism in Spain for nearly four decades.

Meanwhile in the elections in April and May of 1936 left unity was to repeat its success in France[4]. This time mass occupations were to be used to strengthen the Popular Front Government.

France.

Revolutionary heritage: France has a long revolutionary history. In 1848 the first "workers' co-operatives . . . took root" following the revolution of that year[5], and the Paris Commune of 1871 saw the first proletarian led revolution[6].

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1. The Frente Popular gained 4,838,449 votes to the 3,996,931 of the parties of the right. (S.Lens, 1974, p.68).
2. By now it was 1½ million strong.
3. S.Lens, op cit, p.71.
4. "On July 4th, 1936, Leon Blum formed the first Popular Front Government of the French Republic. The breath of a dual spring blew softly over Europe. For, as of that moment, those who had feared the seemingly omnipotent onslaught of Fascism, had found a tentative weapon to halt its march toward apocalypse". Ibid, p.69.
5. R.Hadley, 1973, p.7.
6. Cf. K.Marx, 1937.

France's revolutionary trade union history is a long one also. In the 1890s the increasing participation of anarchists within the trade union movement furthered the development of anarcho-syndicalism[1]. Various tendencies appeared at first but in 1895 the first steps were taken towards unification, with the establishment of the CGT[2].

The First World War helped to divide anarchists; especially with some sections supporting the war effort. The death knell was sounded by the Russian Revolution which led to serious divisions within the CGT and the founding of a breakaway revolutionary grouping - the CGT Unitaire (CGTU) - in 1921. Initially led by syndicalists the communists gained the leadership in 1922. It was this breakaway that was to become the largest trade union body in France.

The Russian Revolution also had a profound impact on France's socialist forces. Im 1920 the majority of French socialists joined the Comintern and turned communist. Thus, from its birth the French Communist Party was a mass party and "not an avant-garde splinter group like other European Communist Parties": it was "the direct heir of pre-First World War French socialism, and had a broad base to build from"[3].

Front Populaire: The radical background of France helps one to understand the formation of the Front Populaire in 1936 and the action taken by French trade unionists to strengthen its position. In the face of an economic crisis and the rise of fascism the French Left were strong enough to form a united front to meet the challenge. And, when it seemed that the new Popular Front Government might be defeated before it had

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1. In the following years anarcho-syndicalism spread to other European nations and to Latin America. Cf. G.Woodcock, 1962, p.298.

2. Anarchist influence over the CGT reached its peak in the years 1902-1908 and then steadily declined in the face of a series of disastrous strikes.

3. P.Seale and M.McConville, 1968, p.181.

even begun to take office the trade union movement took direct action by occupying the factories in its defence[1].

The Front Populaire was formulated against a background of economic and political crisis. Up until 1929 France had enjoyed a period of growing stability and prosperity. This ended after the Wall Street crash of that year. The generalisation of the crisis led to the return of a Left-Centre coalition, replacing the existing Right-wing Government. This was 1932 but by now France's position at home and abroad was worsening. The new Government resorted to a programme of severe economies over the next two years[2].

The Government, led by Radical-Socialist Party leader M.Daladier, was held together by the support of Leon Blum's Socialist party. This support began to weaken when it became clear that the Government were unwilling to embark upon a course of far-reaching reform. Nonetheless, the Socialists continued their support through to the Autumn of 1933 when Daladier took a conciliatory approach to the new Hitler Government[3]. When the Government proposed a six per cent cut in Civil Service salaries in October of that year the Socialists voted against and the Daladier Government fell. Over the next period there were several changes of Government, including three in a period of three months.

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1. "It must be borne in mind . . . that the traditions of the French working class have always been strongly coloured by Syndicalism, and that they are therefore the more drawn to direct action . . .
   The actual conduct of the strikes was in many cases in the hands of the Communists, and both Communists and the C.G.T. afterwards claimed credit for the success achieved". D.M.Pickles, 1938, pp.139-40.

2. New protectionist measures were introduced in order to keep out imports, which greatly increased after the British came off the gold standard in 1931. French exports and its tourist traffic had fallen off at a rapid rate and the country, still on the gold standard, became one of the dearest in Europe. D.M.Pickles, op cit, pp.119-20.

3. Only a few days earlier Germany had withdrawn from the League of Nations. Thirty members of the Socialist Party's Parliamentary Group voted with Daladier and helped keep him in office at this point.

In the midst of political crisis a scandal rocked the nation. It involved political corruption and the police handling of the affair led to the fall of the Government[1]. In this situation the right-wing and especially the fascist Croix de Feu attempted to exploit the situation. On February 6th, 1934, street demonstrations were called for against parliamentary corruption but in fact designed to discredit the Republic and lead the way to a fascist dictatorship[2].

The new National Governments of Doumergue (1934), Flandin (1934/35) and Laval (1935/36) not only failed to deal with the economic crisis but also failed to deal with the increasing challenge of the fascist groups[3]. In the face of this the Front Populaire began to take shape.

The stay-in strikes: The fascist demonstrations helped to unite the French Left which responded by calling a counter-demonstration for February 9th (1934) and a general strike for the 12th[4]. The counter demonstration attracted large numbers of Socialists and Communists and the general strike was supported by nearly four-and-a-half million Socialist and Communist trade union members. In July both parties signed

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1. This was called the Stavisky affair. Stavisky was eventually found shot and in a situation which implicated the police. This was followed by a a so-called independent inquiry into the affair but with the Prime Minister's brother-in-law being in charge of the investigation.

2. The demonstrations were to be the opening shots of a campaign for "the discrediting of parliamentary government and of the Republic . . . From then onwards, what had been largely a press campaign accompanied by violent demonstrations became in effect a block of active supporters of some form of Fascist State". (D.M.Pickles, 1938, p.125).

3. Doumergue, in fact, attempted to curb parliamentary power in favour of greater Prime Ministerial rule; he was on friendly terms with leading fascists, and continually attacked the Left as enemies of the Republic.

4. "The 9th of February was the reply to the challenge of Fascism of the sons and grandsons of those who had died on the barricades in 1871". (D.M.Pickles, 1938, p.126).

a United Action Pact by which they agreed to join forces to defend democracy and peace and to fight fascism at home and abroad. By 1936 this had been forged into a Front Populaire which included the Radical-Socialists and the Republican-Socialists. The new alliance's platform[1] included the suppression of economic privilege to some extent but it was not a socialist platform. Its primary aim was the defence against fascism:

"We solemnly pledge ourselves to remain united for the defence of democracy, for the disarmament and dissolution of the Fascist leagues, to put our liberties out of reach of Fascism. We swear, on this day . . . to defend the democratic liberties conquered by the people of France, to give bread to the workers, work to the young, and peace to humanity as a whole" (2).

The Front Populaire triumphed in the election but was under threat even before it took office:

"The election of a Left Government was thought by many . . . to herald either immediate inflation or immediate devaluation, and a flight from the franc, with a consequent alarming loss of gold by the Bank of France, followed" (3).

The Left were powerless to tackle the problem because the defeated Government were entitled, under the Constitution, to retain office until the end of the month. The trade unions reacted by staging a series of stay-in strikes, and these continued and spread throughout the following month of June[4]. The CGT led workers saw the strikes as the best way of expressing the demand that their political leaders,

"were expected to get down to business and not be intimidated when once in power . . . by pressure from extra-parliamentary interests, by threats of disaster to the franc and to the country . . . which were certain to abound in the press" (5).

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1. This included the enforcement of trade union rights; reductions in the working week; the promotion of public works' schemes; the establishment of a national unemployment fund; State control of agricultural prices and cheap agricultural credits; the nationalization of the Bank of France; and the control of the organization of banking and credit in general. (Cf. D.M.Pickles, 1938, pp.135-38).

2. Ibid. Speech by Leon Blum at the 1935 Socialist Party Congress.

3. Ibid, p.140.

4. Several continued into August.

The victory? The strike movement, involving over a million workers, helped the new Government to bring the Senate "to heel and make possible the proposed Popular Front legislation"[1]. It also helped to boost trade union membership from one-and-a-half to five million in just three months. The massive stay-in strikes[2], thus, helped to stave off fascism, achieve significant economic gains for the workers[3] and tie the hands of the Front Populaire's enemies for at least a small period of time.

The life of the Front Populaire was, however, to be short lived; mainly due to the fact that it was, after all, only a unity built around an opposition to fascism and not around a socialist programme for the transformation of the economy[4]. As the nation's economic crisis deepened the alliance began to fall apart with the Socialists opposing

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1. D.M.Pickles, 1938, p.139. The Communists had gained 62 seats in the election, taking it from 10 to 72 seats. The Socialists, however, held the largest number of seats of the alliance and thus their leader, Leon Blum, took over the Prime Ministership. The Communists supported the new Government but refused to hold office.

2. Stay-in strikes were chosen over traditional strikes for a number of reasons. Direct action had a long history in France, and the traditional strike method had proven ineffective on more than one occassion: in 1920, for example, a CGT strike failure led to the sacking of 25,000 workers. Additionally, the situation called for radical action and was not without parallel; other leftish governments had been threatened by strikes of capital and capitulated or where defeated and again the Bank of France had a hand in the affair. Cf. D.M.Pickles, 1938, pp.116-7.

3. The economic gains have been described as "spectacular" and laying "the foundations for an advance in working-class conditions which (were) likely to put the French worker well ahead of those of all other European countries". Cf. P.Seale and M.McConville, 1968, p.159; D.M.Pickles, op cit, p.142.

4. "Speaking to the Socialist Congress, immediately after the elections . . . M.Blum emphasized that the Popular Front Government was not a Socialist Government, but that its aim was to "administer the bourgeois State", "to put into effect the Popular Front programme, not to transform the social system". D.M.Pickles, op cit, p.130.

the Radical's demand for a more cautious approach, and the Communists committed to maintenance of the anti-fascist alliance but opposed to reform socialism. In September of 1938 the Socialists began conducting independent campaigns during local elections and they resigned from the Government shortly afterwards following an attack on the Communist Party by the new Radical Prime Minister, M.Chautempts. The Front Populaire had come to the end of the road[1]. Thirty years later France was yet again to be faced with a wave of mass occupations involving a United Left of Socialists, Communists and Radicals and again amidst a growing economic crisis.

A "mini-experiment in revolution". France 1968: Events in France during May, 1968, have been described as "a disturbance in French society on a scale to break the seismograph"[2]. With student unrest, street barricades and battles, and with a nationwide strike[3] involving nine million workers France appeared on the verge of a revolution. This shattered a western world that felt it had no need of social seismographs; a world claiming the 'end of ideology' and the onset of an era of post-capitalism[4]. But,

> "The French tremor was more than an aberrant lapse in the confident march of Western industrial society. The point is that it nearly overthrew the most majestic government in Europe. Its lessons must be carefully pondered because they carry a hint of what politics in the West may be like in the 1970s" (5).

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1. In the meantime its Spanish counterpart was fighting for its life against Franco fascism - aided by a policy of 'non-alignment' to which the Blum Government had adhered.
2. P.Seale and M.McConville, 1968. The phrase "mini-experiment . . ." is theirs.
3. This consisted largely of factory and workplace occupations.
4. Cf. D.Bell, 1961; R.Dahrendorf, 1959.
5. P.Seale and M.McConville, op cit, 'Forward'.

Background to events: May, 1968, began with a demonstration in Paris in which over one hundred thousand CGT members voiced their protest at Government policies. Between the 2nd and 3rd a number of colleges were closed by the authorities in the face of radical student unrest[1]. Over the next days the police responded to student demonstrators with exceptional brutality and arrests[2]. The students reacted by occupying their colleges and demonstrating in the streets. On the night of the 10th street barricades appeared as student demonstrators attempted to ward off attacks by the notorious riot police[3], and the sheer scale and extent of the violence of the CRS led to a solidarity strike by the trade union movement. On Monday, May 13th, millions of workers answered the strike call and demonstrations were held in several major towns; in Paris seven hundred thousand marched through the streets[4].

The mass occupations: Events were rapidly unclogging a dam of pent up feeling. The day following the general strike and mass demonstrations Sud-Aviation and Renault workers occupied their factories. This was the begining of a series of occupations over the next few days[5].

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1. Nanterre Faculty was closed on the 2nd and the Sorbonne on the 3rd.

2. Increasingly stories in the press refered to severe beatings and even rape of students held in police custody.

3. Called the Compagnie Republicaine de Securite (CRS).

4. The working class had known violent police action during strikes, in the Autumn and Winter of 1967, at Caen, Le Mans and Rhodiaceta.

5. Sud-Aviation workers at Nantes had already faced their share of frustrations. Over the years their demands had been met with lockouts. Early in May the unions decided on strike action following a management refusal to concede their wage claim. On May 13th they joined in the general strike and the following day decided to occupy their factory.
   The same day Renault workers at Cleon went on strike but later, failing to get the night shift to join them, occupied the factory.

By the 19th of May there were two million workers involved in occupations and by the 22nd it had grown to nine million[1]. The great majority of those involved were unorganised but mostly took leadership from the tightly knit union groups within many workplaces. Unlike 1936 when only industrial workers were involved these occupations included many 'white collar' workers; civil servants, teachers, office clerks, etc.

The situation was complicated by a number of different demands from various factories, trade union confederations and political groups. Demands ranged from the minute economic claim through to calls for the overthrow of the capitalist state and its replacement by any one of a number of socialisms.

What 1968 did hold in common with 1936 was that it also ended with a round-table agreement between employers, unions and Government which brought substantial economic gains for the workers[2].

The nature of the situation: Opinion is sharply divided as to the nature of the situation in May 1968. There are some on the left who claim that it was a revolutionary situation requiring decisive leadership and that the fact that it ended in only temporary economic gains was due largely to the reformist nature of the French Communist Party (PCF)[3].

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1. It has been argued that the rebellious actions of the students "detonated" the explosion of working class action. The French Communist Party, on the other hand, claim that it was primarily due to the fact that economic demands had not been met over a period of years despite short strike actions. Cf. P.Seale and M.McConville; A.Hoyles, 1973.

2. Over the period up to October, 1968, salary increases in the private sector rose by around 10%, agricultural workers received 56-59% increases and shop workers 72%. In the public sector increases were 14-21% for electricity workers, transport workers and civil servants; 10-14% for car workers. Improvements in working hours included weekly cuts of ½ hour for Citroen workers; 1½ hours for railwaymen and 2 hours for chemical workers. At Air France workers were reimbursed for their loss of wages during the occupations and the same was true for civil servants.

3. Cf. A.Hoyles, op cit, Chapter VI.

The PCF, on the other hand, held that "the ten million workers on strike were not demanding power for the working-class, but better conditions of life and work"[1].

The question of whether it was a potential revolutionary situation or not is difficult to answer. There are various indications that large sections of workers were not initially concerned with any radical challenge to capitalism, but how far revolutionary leadership could have changed that position is difficult to guess at:

> "In spite of the factory occupations, the working class in its immense majority did not cross the fateful frontier between striking for higher wages, shorter working hours, earlier retirement . . . and striking to change society. In isolated plants the movement went further. Some strike committees became so well organized as to seem the expression of a new form of workers' power . . . But whatever young revolutionaries may claim, there is no full-scale chapter to be written on 'Experiments in Revolution' in the French working class in 1968" (2).

In addition it had to be noted that rebellion had not spread to the armed forces or the police, and General De Gaulle had alerted his generals to stand by to put down any insurrection. The working-class, on the other hand, were generally not armed. To have attempted a revolution from such a position would have been suicidal. Certainly the PCF felt that such a step would have been a profound and dangerous error:

> "It was no academic arguement. There was much at stake, perhaps even the lives of countless workers and the future of the whole French labour movement, as well as of the Communist Party itself. It is hard to believe that the Party was not right in refusing to be stampeded into insurrection . . . The great mass of French workers and peasants wanted more bourgeois comforts, not a new social order; the country as a whole was prosperous; the Army was well-equipped and loyal to the regime; the ruling classes were not ready to capitulate. Power was not so easy to be had. To reach out for it - by illegal means - was to risk a bloody civil war, for which the workers were unenthusiastic and unprepared" (3).

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1. PCF statement quoted in A.Hoyles, 1973, p.57.

2. P.Seale and M.McConville, 1968, pp.145-6.

3. Ibid, p.186.

Beyond the characterisation of the situation the PCF and the CGT are blamed for failing to build on the radical developments within the workforce. The truth of this is difficult to assess. Certainly the Party and CGT helped to press forward the impressive economic gains that were achieved, but it is also true that these were immediately endangered by the massive political gains made by De Gaulle in the General Election the following month. The vexing question is, did the PCF's indecisive leadership pave the way for De Gaulle's triumph or was that triumph in fact an expression of the true extent of anti-revolutionary feeling within the country? No definate answer comes up either way, but it is now known that the PCF was in the early stages of a change in ideological direction which, in the early 1970s, was to develop into the more parliamentary orientated 'Eurocommunism'.

Post-1968: Since May 1968 French workers have adopted the occupation as a standard weapon of industrial dispute. The 'work-in' has also been adopted as a tactic, the most famous and protracted of which was at the Lip factory, Besancon, in June 1973.

The Lip watch factory was taken over by the workforce in response to a proposal of the firm to sell it; with the loss of several hundred jobs. The finished product made during the work-in, along with stock removed from the firm's warehouses, were sold in the local town. Through several months of operation the work-in received substantial support from fellow trade unionists until it was eventually taken over by a combination of government and private investment[1].

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1. It is not clear as to the status of the venture after this point. The factory has variously been referred to as a "workers' co-operative" but other reports throw doubt on this. For instance, 'The Guardian' (April, 6th 1976) reported that the "shareholders were not prepared to continue backing the factory", G.Tavernier (1975) reported that it had been taken over by the Compagnie Europeene d'Horlogerie SA.

Lip, as with its British counterpart at the Upper Clyde Shipyards (UCS), generated a spate of successors. One involved the British owned factory of Everwear Candlewick, in south-east France, where workers staged a work-in and continued to produce bedspreads which they then sold in the local towns and villages of the region[1].

Although French workers have continued to use the tactic for other industrial aims[2] redundancy has remained the main theme. In April 1976, for instance, a demonstration in Paris revealed the serious nature of the country's unemployment problem and the extent to which the occupation tactic had become a continued and acceptable form of industrial protest. Among the several thousand demonstrators were many from occupied factories, along with unemployed workers demanding action against unemployment[3].

Since the mass occupations there have been hundred upon hundred of occupations in France[4] but they appear to lack the radical intent which was evident in some occupied factories during May '68. The main concern has been to save jobs or to win an industrial dispute in the most effective way possible. At Lip, for example, the regional union official

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1. The company, Vantona Ltd (Manchester), was listed as the 638th largest U.K. industrial concern at that time. Cf. 'The Times 1000 . . .', 1971.

2. For instance, 44 occupations were in progress in July 1975 of which 32 concerned redundancy (involving 2,000 workers), 7 concerned wage claims (1,500 workers), 2 concerned manning disputes (500 workers) and 3 concerned other non-redundancy issues (3,400 workers). Metra, 1975, pp.21-22, and 45.

3. One occupation workforce, from Le Parisien Libere newspaper, distributed pirate editions of the paper to demonstrators: they had been occupying their workplace for two years.

4. Dr. Ad Teulings of the Adviesbureau voor Arbeid en Organisatie (University of Amsterdam) claims that as many as 200-300 have originated in a single month and as many as 40 in a single day. (Interview, Amsterdam Sept.1975).

claimed that the workers were "more interested in preserving their jobs than in any ideals of industrial democracy"[1]. How far this opinion is representative of the Lip workforce, or any other occupation workers, is unclear. Nonetheless, an important political dimension is perceived as being inherent in the occupations. In the words of Jose Bidegain, the head of a Paris based association of young chief executives,

"In effect, the workers are telling management, if you cannot run the place let us have a go. This is a spreading attitude among workers" (2).

Latin America.

Argentina: Possibly the first use of mass occupations in the post-war period was in Argentina. In 1964 the Peronista unions attempted to win economic and constitutional demands through the use of mass factory occupations. The unions were demanding higher wages and pensions and an end to restrictions on political activity. The plan apparently failed despite the fact that more than a half-a-million workers "invaded their factories, seized hostages, barricaded gates, etc"[3].

Colombia: In Colombia in the mid-1960s a brick making factory was taken over and kept in production by the workers when threatened with closure. Surprisingly, the Minister of Labour turned down a management request for an injunction against the workers, declaring instead that,

". . . the workers have a right to take over the company because management had misbehaved and had blatantly broken an employment contract with the workforce" (4)

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1. G.Tavernier, 1975, p.38.
2. Ibid. The organisation was called L'Enterprise et Progress.
3. P.Anderson, 1967.
4. G.Tavernier, op cit, p.39. No indication is given of further developments but there is a suggestion that it is still in operation.

Chile: Some occupations occurred in Chile during the period of the Allende Government in the early 1970s. These were part of a process of social transformation which came to an abrupt end with the coup d'etat in 1973[1].

Belgium.

One of the earliest occupations in post-war Europe was in Belgium in 1967. Workers at an Anglo-German factory resisted redundancies by sitting-in and received the support of fellow metal workers throughout the French speaking areas of the country. Since then further occupation have taken place throughout Belgium.

In 1970, for instance, two factories threatened with closure were occupied; one a cloth factory and the other a stove manufacturer. In 1972 a Brussels' department store, owned by Union Economique, experienced a sit-in against declared redundancies[2].

N.A.T.O: One sensational action was that staged by clerical staff at the headquarters of N.A.T.O. in mid-March 1976. No attempt was made to gain control of any of the organisation's buildings. The action was a short "desk-in" protest, lasting for twenty-four hours, over wages. Nonetheless, it did reveal the extent to which the occupation tactic was extending and to sections of employees not thought likely to be militant, i.e., security screened workers.

The work-in: Belgian workers have also resorted to the use of the work-in in defence of their jobs. This was the case at Cristalleries Val-St.Lambert in Liege. The crystals produced in the occupied factory

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1. Cf. K.Clark, 1972.

2. Metra, 1975, p.22.

were sold through established retail outlets and ones developed in Europe and the USA by the workers themselves. The factory was eventually taken over and kept in production by the Belgian Government[1].

Holland.

Dutch occupations date to the early 1970s and were influenced to some extent by events in neighboring France, Belgium and Britain. One early Dutch occupation workforce refered to the UCS work-in as the inspiration to their own action. Shop stewards from the UCS had previously toured Holland for support and groups of Dutch trade unionists had since been involved in meetings in Britain which were addressed by UCS stewards[2].

Germany.

German workers have used the tactic but to a lesser extent. One noted case was at the Dusseldorf Seibel chemical works but other examples are difficult to find[3]. The post-war history of 'Germany' possibly goes a long way to explaining the relative lack of overall radical action among German trade unionists. Not insignificant is the fact that Germany was divided, with many Communists and Social Democrats helping to play a role in the affairs of the Eastern German Democratic Republic. By the same token, the Federal Republic became a front line anti-communist state, with an outlawed Communist Party and a union leadership controlled by 'moderates'.

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1. G.Tavernier, 1975, pp.36-7.

2. In particular they attended a meeting on unemployment called by the Institute for Workers' Control (IWC) in Newcastle in January 1972. This was also attended by stewards from the Fisher-Bendix (Liverpool) and Plessey (Alexandria) occupations. Dutch metal workers at the meeting stated that the UCS work-in was "a symbol of struggle in Holland". A short while later the Dutch union was involved in its own occupation. Cf. A.Mills, 1976a, p.5.

3. Metra, 1975, p.38. No date is given for the occupation.

Switzerland.

From around the mid-1970s Switzer and saw a sizeable number of occupations and strikes as Swiss workers pushed ahead with a number of claims for wages and conditions improvements; part of a process of periodic renegotiation. So far the Swiss do not appear to have engaged in occupations to resist redundancies.

Portugal.

After forty-eight years of fascist dictatorship in Portugal the Caetano Government was toppled, in April 1974, by an Armed Forces Movement (MFA). Although begining with the armed forces revolution quickly spread to the peasants and workers:

"Workers protested and rebelled against intolerable working conditions, began to organize unions on a mass scale, and strikes broke out before the legal right to strike was established. Landless peasants and agricultural workers began to demand agrarian reform based on giving the land to those who tilled it, and more and more of the demonstrations called for an immediate end to the war and independence for the colonies" (1).

A backward state: In the period leading up to the revolution Portugal was the least developed country in Europe, both in industry and agriculture: with the lowest per capita income, the highest rate of infant mortality, the lowest life expectancy, and the highest rate of illiteracy in Europe. The economy was controlled by powerful monopolies which owned over eighty percent of the nation's wealth[2]. By the onset of the 1970s the country was in great difficulties. It had a huge and mounting balance of payments deficit, and it was being economically drained by its colonial wars in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau.

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1. G.Green, 1976, p.24.

2. Ibid, pp.19-20. As few as 35 families owned more wealth than the rest of the nation's 8½ million people combined.

These wars were also taking their toll in terms of social unrest within Portugal itself.

The revolution: The process of toppling the fascist regime rapidly became increasingly radical. Political prisoners were released and political parties allowed to flourish. The Communists (PCP) and the Socialists (PS) were brought into a Provisional Government. Trade unions were legalised and a single federation, Intersindical, recognised. An attempted rightist coup in September 1974 strengthened the position of the left in the Government: nearly all banks, the biggest monopolies, and thirty insurance companies were nationalised. At the grass roots level, meanwhile, landless peasants and agricultural labourers were encouraged to occupy more of the large estates that were not being cultivated, and workers were encouraged to seize control of their workplaces[1].

Portugal's occupations: At one level Portugal experienced two types of occupation; those designed as a way of winning concessions within the existing private ownership structure, and those designed, in the context of social revolution, to effect a change in ownership. Both, ofcourse, played their part in the revolutionary transformation of Portugal, but the former type cannot be clearly distinguished from the mass actions of Italy and France[2].

Revolutionary occupations: In the early days of the revolution a vast number of estates were seized by the peasants and workplaces occupied by workers[3]. Such actions continued well after the fall of the

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1. G.Green, 1976, p.33.
2. Certainly this kind of action was a weak element in preventing a shift to the right in Portuguese Government since 1975.
3. In one case the Secca metal plant, Oporto, was seized when its owners - Caetano relatives - fled the country.

Caetano Government. In Lisbon, as late as February 1976, two hundred bakery workers seized their bakeries after the owner fled the country[1], and that same month a "Union of Employers with Factories Occupied" was formed. The Ministry of Labour, at that time, was dealing with the recognition of self-managed firms, of which ninety-three were being contested by their former owners, while in one hundred and thirty-one other cases the owners had forsaken their claims[2].

The seizing of a newspaper and a radio station, in mid-1975, was of a more contraversial nature. Printers at the Lisbon daily 'Republic' seized control of the building demanding a say on editorial policies[3]. The Socialist Party leadership used the situation to launch an attack on the PCP; claiming that it was behind the seizure and intended to close down one of the few non-PCP controlled publications[4]. The army where then used to regain control of the paper and hand it back to the owners. The owners, however, presented the army a list of demands which they wanted enacted before they took back responsibility for the paper[5]. The army refused to enact the owners' demands so the paper was left in the hands of the workforce.

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1. Red Notes, No.3, 1976.

2. Ibid.

3. The action began with a strike designed to prevent the publication of, what the printers regarded as, a series of "counter-revolutionary" articles.

4. Socialist Prime Minister, Mario Soares, refered to 'Republica' as "the last voice of freedom" against communism and hence the PCP's desire to see it closed. This was a line pursued by many, including the Sunday Times Insight Team.
   The paper had, in fact, continued publication throughout fascist rule on a legal basis and had only veered towards support for the PS after the revolution. Only a tiny handful of 'Republica' workers were PCP members and the PCP only took action in support of the seizure; they did not initiate it. Such facts are now addmitted. Cf.'The Nation', 4th Oct.1975.

5. Demands included the sacking of all "dissident"workers and the exclusion of all workers from any aspect of editorial policy. Cf. G.Green, 1976.

A similar attempt to use an occupation to discredit the left was used when workers on a Catholic-Church owned radio station seized control: the workers were angry at the "reactionary" nature of the broadcasts[1]. Only after widespread attacks on the PCP and threats to the workforce itself was the radio returned to its Church owners.

Non-revolutionary occupations: On the day of the overthrow of Caetano, April 25th, a single factory in the entire country was on strike. The workers of the Mague metallurgical company were demanding a minimum wage of six thousand escudos[2] a month. Management immediately met the claim in full, least they be thought to have fascist leanings, and work resumed the next day. The ruling Junta, fearful of a spate of unrest, issued a statement saying that the new pay deal was an example which should not be followed. But the example was followed; by a workforce compelled for years to restrain their demands.

One of the most important actions was at the Lisnave shipyard where the workers staged one of the country's biggest strike in support of the now widespread demand for a minimum six thousand escudos a month. A delegation from the Junta met the workers and persuaded them to postpone the strike for a week pending negotiations but nine days later, in mid-May, a new wave of unrest broke out and the shipyards were occupied. Within days two hundred thousand workers were on strike - in textiles, banking, chemicals, electronics and other industries[3]. Companies began granting concessions which would have been considered amazing a few weeks earlier.

On May 26th the Government announced the establishment of a

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1. The PS at this time were bent on weakening the pro-communist left influences in the country with a view to establishing a more traditional social democratic style of Government and Economy.

2. About £100.

3. Cf. The 'Sunday Times Insight Team Report, 1975, p.122.

minimum wage of three thousand and three hundred escudos per month, increases in family allowances and the strict control of rents and prices[1]. This helped to get the workers back to work although those at Lisnave only did so after long mediation with officers of the MFA.

The ensuing years since the revolution have seen a succession of Governmental changes; going from right to left and then far-left and then back to the right[2] when, in April 1976, elections brought the Socialist Party to power. The PS leadership began a process, which has continued since, of attempting to reverse many of the gains of the revolution including the handing back of land and workplaces to former owners and against the wishes of the occupying peasants and workers.

Against this political background worker occupations have continued. For example, in January 1976, Timex workers at the Lisboa plant occupied when they were locked-out during a more traditional strike[3]. This largely young[4], female[5], workforce had been striking for higher wages and against redundancies[6] and short-time working. Ultimately they lost the battle when the management, aidied by the new PS led Government, succeeded in mass sackings.

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1. By now the Junta had given way to a "Provisional Government" which included PCP participation.

2. Rightist President Spinola was forced to resign in July 1974 after failing to do away with the MFA and the Provisional Government and install presidential rule. He was replaced by pro-communist Vasco Goncalves. Two attempted rightist coups (September '74 & April '75) helped shift Government further left but months later an ultra-leftist coup attempt tilted power back to the right.

3. Other British companies to be occupied in Portugal include British Leyland, and Plessey. ITT had plants in Britain and Portugal occupied.

4. Predominantly 17-19 year olds.

5. Accounting for 70% of the workforce.

6. These included two-thirds of their union "worker commission" members. The workforce formed an "anti-imperialist front" of workers in other Portuguese based multi-nationals, and contacted workers at other European Timex factories.

In the still politically volatile Portugal non-revolutionary occupations may nonetheless contribute significantly to a weakening of capital and thus contribute to a resurgance and victory of the revolutionary forces.

United Kingdom.

Working class heritage: The United Kingdom has a long history of trade-unionism and trade union radicalism[1]. It was the organised working class which pioneered the occupation tactic in this country and more particularly those sections schooled in radical political theory. In the 1920s railway workers used the tactic and in the 1930s it was the turn of the South Wales Miners' Federation: both unions schooled in anarch-syndicalism and, later, communism.

The syndicalist tradition: Syndicalism was an important influence in the trade union movement for a short period prior to the First World-War[2]. It is perhaps significant that its first roots were established in Glasgow, in 1905 and that "the idea of industrial unionism began to take root in Singer's, Clydebank; in the Argyle Motor Works, Alexandria; and in the Albion Motor Works, Scotstoun"[3]. These areas were to be famous sixty years or so later with the UCS and Plessey occupations.

Industrial unionism in the form of the 'Industrial Workers of Great Britain' (IWGB) began to play an important role on the Clydeside with four thousand members at Singer's alone.

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1. Cf. A.Hutt, 1975; T.Lane, 1974; E.P.Thompson ,1968 - on trade unionism. K.Coates & T.Topham, 1970; G.Woodcock, 1970 - on syndicalism. T.Bell, 1941; W.Gallacher, 1978; J.Klugmann, 1968, 1969; L.J.MacFarlane, 1966 - on communism.

2. That is not to say that they were a predominant force but, rather, an important influence among sections of union militants.

3. T.Bell, op cit, p.71. The IWW was influencial in this development and a British counterpart - the IWGB - was established.

Within a few years former Singer workers were to be found playing important roles in the 'Clyde Workers' Committee' which led the massive strike wave on Clydeside during the First World-War[1].

Two figures who helped further syndicalism in the country, and in Ireland, were Tom Mann[2] and James Connolly[3]. As an influential trade union figure Mann helped to popularise syndicalism among militants and its spread within the miners of the South Wales Miners' Federation (SWMF) and the railwaymen of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS). Connolly had been active in Glasgow at the time of the IWGB's establishment and a short while later moved to the USA where he played an active role in the IWW. On his return to his native Ireland he spread the idea of syndicalism and industrial unionism and had a notable success in the form of the establishment of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union (ITGWU). In 1913 the ITGWU led a general strike which crippled Dublin in "the most important event of 1913" for Irish and British trade unionists[4]. The ITGWU appealed to the British trade union movement for help and,

"received a burst of enthusiastic solidarity such as had not been known since the great dockers' strike of 1885" (5).

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1. An early IWGB strike at Singer's was defeated but a Glasgow militant, Tom Bell, predicted that, "every man dismissed would become the nucleus of a group of industrial unionists that would spring up all over the Clyde". T.Bell, 1941, p.75.

2. Mann had played a leading role in the 1889 Dock strike. He returned to England in 1910 and was eventually to become President of the AEU.

3. It has been claimed that "the ideas of Industrial Unionism were pioneered in Britain by Connolly". K.Coates and T.Topham, 1970, p.5

4. H.Pelling, 1969, p.133.

5. T.A.Jackson, 1971 ,p.377.

Funds came in from a large number of British unions, including the T.U.C. The nature of the action and the solidarity engendered had an "incidental result . . . of decisive importance" on the British labour movement:

"In England, a great wave of militant ("syndicalist") trade-unionism flared up to threaten the greatest industrial conflict in history" (1).

Marxism: As in several other countries, syndicalism began to wane in the wake of the 1917 Russian Revolution and marxism reached a new ascendency in the formation of the Communist Party. Many former syndicalist leaders came together in the new Party[2], the CPGB, which became influential among Scottish and Welsh miners and militant sections of the engineering union[3].

The Occupations: The significance of the CPGB is to be found in the role which it played during the General Strike and to a lesser extent in providing leadership to the SWMF's occupations in the 1930s.

The General Strike did not actually involve any occupations but in many ways the various "councils of action" resembled embryo Soviets[4]. In many areas they took over responsibility for publicity, the issuing of strike calls, and the organisation of "defence brigades". More importantly,

"The (TUC) General Council's decision to leave the issue of food permits to the discretion of the railwaymen and transport workers in each area automatically gave the strike committees and councils of action a vital policy-making role to play" (5).

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1. T.A.Jackson, 1971, p.373.

2. Including Tom Mann, Tom Bell, Willie Gallacher and Arthur McManus.

3. CPGB influence was strong in the shop stewards' movement and the 'Shop Stewards and Workers Committee Movement' (SSWCM), along with the Socialist Labour Party and the South Wales Socialist Society, were founding members of the CPGB. Each in their time had syndicalist beginings.

4. Cf. C.Farman, 1972, p.215.

5. Ibid, p. 203.

Many employers were forced to ask the permission of the local council of action to move goods in or out of town or to allow some of their workers to resume work[1].

It is debatable if the General Strike could have been turned into a revolutionary situation given the size of the revolutionary leadership at that time[2]. Nonetheless, within the situation there were a large number of cases where the working class exercised political control far in excess of traditional union practices. Such actions can be seen in a peculiar category standing between the occupation tactic and the revolutionary seizure, and here the new CPGB played a decisive role:

". . . in a number of important industrial centres, including Glasgow, Edinburgh, Barrow, Doncaster, Sheffield, Liverpool and Birmingham, councils of action had been functioning under Communist inspiration for almost a year (prior to the General Strike)" (3).

Way down in the mine: With the defeat of the General Strike the trade union movement was weakened and demoralised. Membership declined and shop steward organisation was weakened. Not a single national strike was to occur for another thirty years. The "employing class" had taken the offensive in curtailing trade union activities through the 'Trade Disputes and Trade Union Act, 1927', while at company level a series of anti-union and victimisation measures were introduced. Company unionism

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1. "In attempting to control transport both the T.U.C. and the strike committees were clearly attempting to substitute their own authority for that of the Government". C.Farman, 1972, p.215.

2. The largest 'revolutionary' organisation was the CPGB with less than 5,000 members. Cf. L.J.Macfarlane, 1966, p.302.

3. In Glasgow there were 5 Party members on the central strike committee, and a Party led campaign established 15 strike committees on which they were well represented. In London the Party had at least one representative on every trades council and 5 on the 12 member London Trades Council Executive. In South Wales the Party had factions in most of the councils of action. Cf. C.Farman, 1972, p.193; L.J.Macfarlane, 1966, p.166.

was an important instrument of employers against the unions. This was the case in the South Wales and Nottingham coal fields in the early 1930s where company unionism was a serious threat[1].

When Arthur Horner took up the post of agent for the anthracite pit, in January 1934, company unionism and the fight for sillicosis compensation were the two major problems before him. For Horner, an active CPGB member, there was only one way forward:

"We would have to use against the company unions and against the continued attack on the miners' conditions . . . the militancy of the rank and file"(2).

Horner planned to take on the Emlyn collieries first as they were the only anthracite pits where company unionism had made progress. A campaign of recruitment was embarked upon and when the SWMF membership was large enough a strike was called. This lasted several weeks and eventually forced the company to break off relations with the "scab union" and recognise the SWMF. This gave inspiration to other union members throughout the coalfield.

Strike action spread but the increasing use of "blackleg" labour undermined the union fight in various cases. Thus, at the West pit of the Nine Mile Point colliery (Cwmfelinfach, Newport), when it looked like "blackleg" labour would be used the day shift stayed down, on strike[3]. News of the "stay down" was carried in the South Wales evening papers and helped to spread the tactic to other pits[4]. The SWMF followed the action

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1. In South Wales a renegade miner, William Gregory, broke a strike at Raglan colliery and began a company union, while in Nottingham a similar action was began by a miner called Spencer and "Spencerism" became synonymous with company unionism.

2. A.Horner, 1960, p.131.

3. This was the first occupation action since that taken by railwaymen in the 1920s. Cf. Metra, 1972.

4. In rapidly spread to six more collieries: "at Nantymoel 250 stayed below; at Blaengarw, 240; at Treherbert, 250; at Ton Pentre, 100; at Treharris, 450; and at Parc No.2 pit Cwmparc, 400". (T.Wild, 1971.)

up with a hunger march throughout South Wales, and a delegate conference of support was called.

By the time of the delegate conference the number of occupied pits had risen to eleven[1] and the companies were announcing their willingness to negotiate. On that basis the strikes and occupations were called off and the SWMF President and Vice-president led a deputation to the West pit to call the men back up. They emerged victorious after seven and a half days underground, with the company agreeing to recognise only the SWMF and promising that there would be no victimisations.

The results of the occupations encouraged the union to use the tactic again in an attempt to "clear up the non-union position at the two Ocean collieries at Cwm Parc, near Treorchy"[2], where company unionism was making some headway[3]. A strike was already underway at these pits but union members "were steadily beaten by blacklegs brought into the pit". In an action reminiscent of that taken by the UAW at Fisher Number Nine and Four plants in Detroit, the SWMF ordered the men back to work. At the meeting to call for a return to work SWMF leaders were called traitors by some in the crowd of five hundred miners, nonetheless a return to work was agreed. Now the union's secret plan came into action. A committee meeting was held the night prior to the return to work and the local leadership was informed of the plan. Necessary preparations were made and the following day, at a given word, a sit-down strike began. The company

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1. This involved over 2,500 miners and attracted solidarity action from the Mardy and Merthyr railwaymen - both ASLEF and NUR - who refused to shift "blacklegs" on the railway.

2. A.Horner, 1960, p.136.

3. The company had won some members away from the SWMF and were moving to make membership of their company union a condition of employment.

were taken by surprise and gave in after thirteen days[1]: the company union was cleared from the pits and a SWMF closed shop was introduced. The SWMF had won a great victory against company unionism and in this the occupation of the pits was "the most vital phase in the struggle"[2].

The post-war experience: The South Wales occupations were widespread and victorious and yet they were to mark the last time the tactic would be used for almost twenty years. In the early post-war years a number of stay-in strikes, or "downers", occurred in the car industry but these never amounted to more than a couple of hours protest action[3].

The first occupation of any length occurred in Belfast in April 1958 when six thousand shipyard workers staged a "24-hour stay-in strike" in protest at the sacking of one thousand workers[4].

Some "spontaneous (but) unsuccessful attempts" were made by miners to occupy their mines "during the resistance to pit closures in the nineteen sixties" but these came to nothing. They failed "to capture the imagination of those mineworkers who were to be displaced from

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1. A.Horner, 1960, pp.137-38. Unfortunately, the 13 day sit-in caused some of those involved to suffer permanent damage to their eyesight.

2. Ibid, p.133. Horner claims that the actions arose from the "spontaneous movements of the rank and file. What should be remembered, however, is the radical history of South Wales and the leadership given to the struggle by men such as Horner. In addition, the miners' international links made them aware of the occupation tactic, such as when -

   "some years before, the miners in Hungary, which was then under the repressive Horthy regime, had staged a stay-down strike" (Horner, p.133).

3. Cf. H.A.Turner, G.Clack and G.Roberts, 1967.

4. The Electrical Trades Union Annual Conference Report, 1958. The reference reports the workers as having demonstrated in London "behind the works' band of Short Brothers and Harland", but it is not clear whether they were from that establishment.

the industry, they did not mobilize community support, and they remained isolated events"[1].

General Electric Company-English Electric (GEC-EE): In 1969 there was a significant breakthrough in the advancement of the occupation tactic in Britain. The year was critical in many respects. British capitalism was facing a rapid deepening of economic crisis; unemployment levels had reached new high points; and the Government were moving to the introduction of laws designed to curb the power of the trade union movement. By the middle of the year trouble flared on the streets of Northern Ireland as Catholic workers demonstrated their anger against age old discrimination and repression, and in Britain as hundreds of thousands of British workers protested against proposed anti-trade union laws. The barricade and political strike had burst onto the United Kingdom political and industrial arena.

Over on Merseyside workers at three GEC-EE factories astonished many in the British labour movement when they planned to stage a "work-in" to prevent redundancies. This represented an imaginative leap in thinking: nowhere had a work-in been embarked upon, it was an entirely novel and radical idea and two years ahead of the actual UCS action. However, apart from two small token sit-ins, the work-in was eventually called off due to a number of weaknesses and divisions within the GEC-EE workers' ranks. The plan, nonetheless, helped to carry the idea further into the thinking of British trade unionists. Certainly many of the local trade unionists who had been organising support for the GEC-EE work-in were themselves involved in their own workplace occupations just over two and a half years later, and the GEC-EE company were to experience the highest number of

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1. K.Coates, 1973, p.19. The idea was, however, put over through the medium of television in the form of a play, 'The Big Hewer', by socialist playwright Jim Allen. Allen followed this with a play about a "work-in" at a Liverpool dock.

sit-ins of any company in Britain.

Briant Colour Printing (BCP): In April 1971 the workers at Briant Colour Printing, in London's Old Kent Road, staged the first successful occupation of the period. The workforce acted immediately and without prior planning in response to a management attempt to make sixty of the one hundred and ninety workforce redundant. Unlike some of the downers in the car industry, however, the Briant workers set out with the intention of occupying the premises until their demands had been met. After just twenty-four hours the management agreed to postpone the redundancies until further discussions had taken place: the workers had won at least a temporary victory.

Despite the dramatic and unique nature of the event the local 'South London Press' only carried a small item on it; no other newspaper reported it. It has been a short and effective action because it had taken management by surprise, but by the same token it went largely unrecorded.[1]

The Upper Clyde Shipyards (UCS): The UCS occupation, in July 1971, marked a vital new turn in the use of the tactic. It held certain new features: it acted as an inspirational example to scores of other occupations; it was waged over a period of months with the deliberate intent of control being maintained until victory was achieved; and workers made redundant were maintained in productive work. Its agitational value lay in the deliberate exercise of control over elements of production and labour.

The UCS had been created as a consortium, consisting of five shipyards, in February 1968. By February 1971 one of the more profitable

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1. Interview with Bill Freeman, BCP leader, August 1975.

yards had been sold and the Government planned to sell of the remaining yards "cheaply" with the loss of five and a half thousand jobs. This threatened the local community with economic and social disaster.

The area and workforce, however, had a long tradition of trade union and political struggle[1] and there existed a skillful and capable leadership among the workers which had united the various trades and yards in advance of the work-in decision. This achievement had been developed and maintained through a "Co-ordinating Committee" of shop stewards and it was this body which put the work-in idea to a mass meeting as a way of fighting redundancies: in this there is clear evidence of an initiating and co-ordinating role being played by leading CPGB members at the yards.

The work-in tactic was accepted on a near unanimous vote of workers at a mass meeting. This was followed, twelve days later, by a one-day solidarity strike of Scottish workers which involved one hundred thousand; fifty thousand of whom marched through Glasgow on a protest demonstration.

The Government refused to budge, however, and on July 30th the work-in began. It was to last fifteen months during which time it received support from trade unionists throughout the world and began a legand in trade union history. By October 1972 the work-in had ended in victory with a large number of jobs and all four yards being saved and kept in production.

Plessey (Alexandria): Long before the UCS work-in looked in sight of victory it had inspired other workers to occupy their workplaces

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1. Including a successful struggle within one of the yards to prevent redundancies only a few years earlier.

in defence of their jobs. Perhaps not surprisingly, the next occupation to occur after the UCS was only a few miles away and in the same industry.

In early September two hundred marine engineers at Plessey's Alexandria works occupied their factory to prevent its closure and the removal of plant, stock and machinery. Unlike the UCS situation these workers did not have the advantage of work still in progress and thus a work-in was ruled out. A strike, on the other hand, would have made closure easier and would have facilitated the removal of machinery and stock. For these reasons a sit-in was embarked upon.

The background to the situation was similar to that at the UCS in that Plessey workers were part of the same militant trade union tradition and faced redundancy in a town where there was high unemployment[1]. Their reaction was as sharp and as dramatic as their UCS comrades.

British Steel Corporation's River Don works (Sheffield): Before a further six weeks had elapsed another group of workers declared their intention of saving their jobs through, what they called, a "work-on". This time it was Sheffield steelworkers at the BSC River Don works where four and a half thousand jobs were at risk in a closure threat. At this time the UCS work-in was very much a regular feature in the Sheffield press and the threatened steelworkers' action was labelled a "UCS type work-in".

Action was taken towards the end of October when the first of the redundancies began to occur. As at UCS, the redundant workers were reemployed under the responsibility of the shop stewards[2], with wages paid out of a hardship fund drawn from a fifty pence a week levy from the

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1. One in every eight workers was unemployed in Alexandria at this time.

2. Unlike UCS these workers were not put on production work but were employed on "campaigning work".

rest of the workforce. The general aim was to keep the workforce intact while a campaign was mounted to save the works from closure. In the event the action helped to keep the works open.

Snow Engineering: Within two days of the announcement of the River Don "work-on" another Sheffield occupation took place and this time at the small Snow Engineering works; again in defence of jobs.

It seems quite certain that the action occurred under the impact of publicity for the UCS and River Don actions. The Snow workers also won and prevented planned redundancies[1].

Birmingham Small Arms (BSA): At the time the Snow occupation was begining another was being called off. At the BSA motorcycle factory in Birmingham three thousand workers faced redundancy and a work-in had been planned in response. It was eventually called off as being impracticable. As a leading shop steward put it, it had

> ". . . become increasingly evident that conditions in motor cycle production as opposed to shipbuilding were completely different. Cycle production with its rapid flow production and dependence on a mass of small components from supplier firms is not necessarily able to conduct a work-in. Infact, many workers came to believe that a work-in would more quickly work them out of a job" (2).

Instead a strike was embarked upon.

The interesting point about the BSA case is that here again were workers facing redundancies being prepared to consider the new and radical action that was being developed elsewhere. In this event the idea was not carried into effect.

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1. This was not before a tactical error was committed. After two days of round-the-clock occupation the workers decided to continue the action in the daytime only. After seven days of this they arrived one morning to find that they were locked out; the management having regained control the previous evening. But the occupation had done enough damage and after a week of traditional strike action the firm gave in.

2. Cf. A.Mills, 1976a, pp.21-22.

Co-operative Insurance Society (CIS): At the end of November events took a new turn when white collar workers at the Co-operative Insurance Society' Manchester office threatened sit-in action as part of a campaign over pay and conditions. In the end a half-day sit-in did take place and was followed by a protest march through the local town. It was no more than a protest action but it signified that occupations were now within the thinking of white collar workers and were being turned to other, non-redundancy, ends.

That same month there was a work-in at the Glasgow factory of McCormick Screen Printing. It was the last occupation of 1971 and the UCS action was in its sixth month. The tactic had now been used in South London, Glasgow, Alexandria, Sheffield and Manchester and had been threatened in Birmingham. It had been used in defence of jobs and in pursuance of a wage claim, and a new year was about to dawn.

The tactic becomes an established trade union weapon.

On the third day of the new year engineers at the Allis Chalmers works, Flintshire, staged the first of over one hundred occupations that were to occur in 1972 and the first in Wales since the 1930s. Occupations now mushroomed, spreading from industry to industry, from town to town, across a range of trade unions and to a variety of ends.

In January alone the tactic was used by engineering workers in Liverpool (Fisher-Bendix) and Manchester (Dawson Barfos; William Crosland), by chemical workers in Stockport (Sim-Chem) and was considered by textile workers in Flintshire (Courtaulds)[1].

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1. Teulings and Leijnse, 1974, record the Coutaulds action as an occupation. This is contradicted by the Counter Information Services Report, No. 10 which refers to "strike action". Teulings and Leijnse make a similar mistake in regard to the BSA action which they describe as a "work-in".

In February a second and more substantial pay occupation occurred when print workers sat-in at their factory, Leicester Photograph and Litho Services. In this case the action was designed to effect control over the works to prevent "blacklegging" during the strike.

March was a milestone in the development of the occupation tactic. On the 16th workers at GKN's James Mill Steel Works, Bredbury, occupied the works in the first of more than fifty sit-ins in the Manchester area and involving thirty thousand engineers in a battle over pay and conditions.

The occupation tactic was now an acceptable action for large numbers of workers and in pursuance of a range of disputes. Another sign of its developing use was seen that same month in a sit-in at a Nottinghamshire ball-bearing works (Ransome, Hoffman and Pollard)[1] and in a work-in at a small Norfolk leather goods factory (Sexton and Sons). In both cases women were the only workers involved and both action were located in small rural areas hardly noted for industrial militancy. This marked a stage at which the occupation can be said to have become established as a standard weapon in the armory of British trade unionists.

By the end of 1972 more than sixty-one thousand workers had taken part in occupations of varying degree; seven in 1971 involved sixteen thousand, and ninety-seven occupations in 1972 involved forty-five and a half thousand. In 1973 over fourteen thousand workers took part in at least twenty five occupations, and over twenty thousand took part in twenty-two the following year. In 1975 there were forty-five or so cases involving just under twenty-four thousand workers; bringing the total for the period April 1971-December 1975 to over two hundred

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1. In this case the workers returned to the factory at night and slept-in to ensure that the company did not remove a computer which could mean the loss of jobs. During the day the factory worked normally.

occupations involving around one hundred and twenty thousand workers[1]. British trade unionists have continued to use the tactic ever since.

Summary.

Workplace occupations have a history stretching back almost ninety years. They have occurred during periods of severe socio-economic crisis and to an important extent have owed their initiation and development to the activities of revolutionary socialists.

The idea of the workplace occupation was developed and pressed forward by syndicalists in various countries with the aim of using such actions in a directly political way as a means of overthrowing capitalism. Ironically, by the time Western capitalism had reached a new high point of crisis syndicalism had been superceded by marxism. The marxists, often former syndicalists, saw the occupation more as a tactic than a strategy and encouraged its use in a less directly political way.

In Italy, for instance, the new communist 'ordinovisti' group encouraged the mass occupations as an effective method of achieving limited workplace gains but also as a contribution to the strengthening of militancy and the weakening of capital. In France the PCP encouraged mass occupations, not to overthrow capitalism, but as a way of creating the conditions for the next stage towards such an eventual goal. In the USA the CIO's radical leadership saw the mass sit-downs as primarily designed to spread trade unionism but in a way which would raise the 'class consciousness' and strength of the working class.

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1. It is difficult to be accurate as newspaper reporting of events is not entirely precise. Some times decisions to occupy are reported but not the actual details of whether the action was taken or not. More often the national newspapers tend to miss a lot of small occupations.

In the post-war era most Communist Parties of Western Europe adopted a 'revolutionary' strategy which put much emphasis on parliamentary gains. As the major 'revolutionary' organisation in most of these countries it has provided a particular direction to workplace occupations. In France, Italy and Britain the various Communist parties have encouraged occupations more as a way of raising "class consciousness" and winning immediate economic gains than as political ends in themselves. In other words, Communist parties[1] have not encouraged occupations as a means of seizing control over capital for more than a short-term period. The CPGB, in fact, took a luke warm attitude to the development of worker co-operatives in Britain.

It is argued that the serious nature of the socio-economic crisis in Britain at the end of the 1960s helps to explain the development of worker occupations at that time. And, that as with such developments in other countries, the radical left - particularly the CPGB - was an important element in the initiation, development and direction of the tactic.

The question of leadership is a vital one. Arguably, without the influence of the CPGB the workplace occupation would not have spread, and to some extent the character of its development also depended on that party. If the CPGB had been committed to the overthrow of capitalism through extra-parliamentary means alone then possibly we might have seen the development of more agressive occupations designed to cause the maximum economic disruption. In short, the nature of the workplace occupations have fitted in with the CPGB's revolutionary strategy which assigns a

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1. The PCP is the exception. It did encourage revolutionary seizures but in the context of revolutionary upheaval.

more indirect role to such industrial struggles. This has encouraged the spread of occupations while keeping them within certain boundaries.

That occupations have required the soil of socio-economic crisis and the hand of revolutionary leadership to develop seems to be the lesson of the history of such events. It is this analysis which helps to throw light on developments in the Britain of the late 1960s/ early 1970s.

Finally, there seems to be something of a recurring pattern to militancy; occurring in certain industries and to a large extent in multi-national companies. Miners, for instance, have sat in in the USA (1901), and in Hungary, Poland, Spain, Yugoslavia and Britain (in the 1930s); so too have steelworkers in the USA (1892), Italy (1920), and Belgium, Britain, Holland and Portugal (1970s); car workers have sat-in in Italy (1920, 1975), the USA (1936), France (1936, 1968), and in Portugal and Britain (1970s); shipyard workers have staged occupations in Italy (1920), Northern Ireland (1958), and in Britain and Portugal (1970s); and there have been sit-ins of printers in France (1968, 1974), Britain (1971, 1972) and Portugal (1976). The working conditions and nature of these industries have likely been of prime importance in the generation of trade union militancy. The impersonal and agressive profit seeking nature of the multi-nationals will likewise have been a contributory factor to the development of militancy.

The impact of the workplace occupation has depended on a number of factors, not least the nature of the revolutionary leadership within that country and the socio-political context in which it had to operate. Thus, the weakness of the emerging Communist party in Italy in 1920 helped to prevent a reversal of the economic ganins of the mass occupations and the possibility of their being used for directly political ends. The PCP, on the other hand, where able to use mass occupations to achieve a

directly political goal in 1936. Certain ideological difficulties[1], however, may have prevented it from strengthening the developments of the mass occupation movement in 1968. In Britain the tiny CPGB was able to contribute to the strengthening of a movement, which included workplace occupations, to bring about the defeated of a Conservative Government. Its weakness, both ideologically and in organisational numbers[2], however, prevented it from turning certain actions into an offensive that would have built upon political and economic gains. Nonetheless, the fact that many of the economic gains from the period's occupations have been eroded should not mask the fact that their positive contribution may lie in an objective strengthening of the "class consciousness" of some sections of trade unionists and in preventing the onset of demoralisation in the trade union movement generally.

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1. Around this time the PCP was developing into a 'Eurocommunist' party which helped to develop many ideological splits within its ranks.

2. The CPGB was begining to develop a 'Eurocommunist' strategy and this was to lead to the first major split in the Party's existance. The New Communist Party was formed in the summer of 1975 by members hostile to the Eurocommunist approach.

CHAPTER 4.

## AN ANATOMY OF WORKER OCCUPATIONS

"...the occupation's main element lies in a measure of control being exercised by the workforce over at least part of the plant and machinery of the company involved" (1).

"The occupation ... includes the aim of using the tactic as a bargaining weapon to achieve certain ends (but excludes) ... those actions which simply have the intention of making a short protest" (2).

### Introduction.

It has been argued (Chapters 1 & 2) that workplace occupations are "in effect fundamentally new bargaining weapons" which challenge or raise the issue of managerial control "in a more direct and effective fashion (than) the more traditional industrial action methods". That is not to say, however, that each and every occupation appeared in a common form, had a common end, were inter-related, or were all directly linked to a common set of factors. This chapter sets out to examine the difference in character, form and origin of workplace occupations to test the hypothesis that such actions can be grouped together in a single category and that they can be linked to a set of definite factors - leadership in particular.

### The Development & Spread of Workplace Occupations: A Chronology.

Table one sets out, in chronological form, the development and spread of workplace occupations. To what extent such actions can in any way be linked together will be looked at in subsequent sections of this chapter. The table lists one hundred and ninety-eight 'cases'. It begins with the UCS,

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1. A.J.Mills, 1976b.
2. See Chapter 1, p.23.

TABLE 1

A CHRONOLOGY OF WORKER OCCUPATIONS.

KEY

A = Firm Occupied.

B = Industry:
- Food, drink & Tobacco (F)
- Coal & petroleum (Cl)
- Chemicals & Allied (Ch)
- Metal Manufacture (MM)
- Mechanical Engineering (ME)
- Instrument Engineering (IE)
- Electrical Engineering (EE)
- Shipbuilding & Marine (SM)
- Vehicles (V)
- Metal Goods (MG)
- Textiles (T)
- Leather, leather goods & fur. (L)
- Clothing & Footwear (CF)
- Bricks, pottery etc (B)
- Timber, furniture, etc (TF)
- Paper, printing, & publishing (P)
- Other manufacturing (OM)
- Construction (C)
- Gas, electricity, & water (G)
- Agriculture, forestry & fishing (A)
- Mining & quarrying (MQ)
- Transport & Communicat. (TC)
- Distribution (D)
- Insurance & Banking (IB)
- Professional & Scient. (PS)
- Public Administration (PA)
- Miscellaneous Services (Mi)

(Categories based on those of Department of Employment).

C = Region:
- South East (SE)
- East Anglia (EA)
- South West (SW)
- West Midlands (WM)
- East Midlands (EM)
- Yorkshire & Humberside (Y)
- North West (NW)
- North (N)
- Northern Ireland (NI)
- Wales (W)
- Scotland (S)

(Categories based on D.of E. 1975)

D = Date occupation began.

E = Type of action:
- occupation of entire workplace (F)
- partial occupation (P)

F = The form of the occupation:
- Involving 'working-in' (W)
- Sit-in. (S)

G = Number of workers involved.

H = Duration of the occupation.

I = The origin of the occupation:
Being primarily due to
- redundancy (R)
- pay (P)
- other (O)

J = Unions involved.

K = Gender composition of those involved:
Solely or overwhelmingly
- males (M)
- females (F)
- a mixture (C)

L = The political involvement/leadership of the workforce:
Involved in political strikes (*) or not (x)/
Having 'far left' leaders (1) or not (x).

M = Links to/with UCS:
Occupation inspired & or assisted by UCS (*) or not (x)

N = Links with other occupations:
Having assisted or been assisted by another occupation (*) or not (x)

? = Information not available.

+ = Company listed in 'The TIMES 1000'.

h = hours d = days m = months y = years

_ =(underlined elements) ditto subsequent cases.

| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| U.C.S. | SM | S | 1971 July | F | W | 8,500 | 15m | R | B'makers AUEW/DATA NUGMWU ASW/ ETU | M | */1 | - | * |
| Plessey (+) (Alexandria) | SM | S | Sept. | F | S | 200 | 5m | R | AUEW | M | x/x | * | * |
| B.S.C. River Don (Sheffield) | MM | Y | Oct, | F | W | 5,000 | 2m | R | AUEW/TASS ASTMS/ETU TGWU/APEX | M | */1 | * | * |
| Snow Engineering (Sheffield) | ME | Y | Oct. | F | S | 180 | 10d | R | AUEW | M | */1 | * | * |
| (C.I.S., Manchester) | (IB) | (NW) | (Nov) | (P) | (S) | (1,800) | (½d) | (P) | (ASTMS) | (C) | (x/x) | (*) | (*) |
| McCormick (Glasgow) | P | S | Nov. | F | W | ? | ? | R | ? | ? | ?/? | * | ? |
| Allis Chalmers (+) (Flintshire) | ME | W | 1972 Jan. | F | S | 150 | 16d | R | AUEW | C | x/x | ** | * |
| Fisher- Bendix (+) (Liverpool) | EE | NW | Jan. | F | S | 700 | 1m | R | TGWU/AUEW ETU/TASS ASTMS/APEX | C | */1 | * | * |
| William Crosland (Bredbury) | ME | NW | Jan. | F | S | 200 | ? | R | AUEW | M | */1 | ? | ? |
| Dawson & Barfos (+) (Gorton) | ME | NW | Jan. | F | S | 250 | ? | R | ? | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Sim-Chem (Stockport) | Ch | NW | Jan. | F | W | 137 | ? | R | ? | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |

| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Churchill Machine Tool (Altrincham) | ME | NW | Jan.72 | ? | S | 1,100 | ? | R | AUEW | ? | */1 | * | * |
| Shell (+) (Carrington) | Ch | NW | Jan. | ? | S | ? | ? | P | ? | ? | */I | ? | ? |
| Leicester Photograph & Litho Services | P | EM | Feb. | F | S | 28 | ? | P | SLADE | M | ?/? | ? | * |
| Linpac (St.Helens) | O | NW | Mar. | F | S | 32 | ? | R | TGWU | C | ?/? | ? | ? |
| The 'Manchester' Engineering Occupations. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| James Mills (+) | MM | NW | Mar. | F | S | 1,000 | 69d | P | AUEW[1]/GMWU | ? | */?[1] | * | * |
| Laurence Scott (+) | EE | | | F | | 580 | 37d | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |
| Davis & Metcalfe | ? | | | F | | 150 | 27d | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |
| Mirrlees Blackstone | ? | | | F | | 1,000 | 61d | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |
| E.Peart & Co. | ME | | | F | | 110 | 40d | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |
| BSC - Openshaw | MM | | | ? | | 360 | 56d | | AUEW | M | */? | | |
| BSC - Trafford Park | MM | | | ? | | 260 | 53d | | AUEW | M | */? | | |
| BSC - Warrington | MM | | | ? | | 176 | 55d | | AUEW | M | */? | | |
| BSC - Robertson | MM | | | ? | | 25 | 53d | | AUEW | M | */? | | |
| BSC - Redpath | MM | | | ? | | 500 | 53d | | AUEW | M | */? | | |
| H.O. Serck (+) | V | | | F | | 200 | 51d | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |
| Ruston Paxman (+) | EE | | | F | | 1,000 | ? | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |
| Sharston Engineering | ? | | | F | | 22 | 14d | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |
| Metal Box (+) | MG | | | F | | 250 | 98d | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |
| Kearns Richards (+) | ? | | | F | | 280 | 36d | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |
| Joseph Robinson | MM | | | ? | | 50 | 52d | | AUEW | M | */? | | |
| GEC/AEI (+) Trafford Pk | EE | | | F | | 3,500 | ? | | AUEW | C | */? | | |
| Royles | ? | | | ? | | 50 | ? | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |

| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The 'Manchester' Engineering Occupations (cont...) | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Scragg & Sons | ME | NW | Mar | F | S | 100 | ? | P | AUEW | ? | */? | * | * |
| Linotype | P | | | F | S | 1,000 | 43d | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |
| Conveyancer Trucks | ME | | | F | S | 480 | 9d | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |
| Follows & Bate Ltd | ME | | Apr. | F | S | 240 | 3d | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |
| Flexibox, Sharston (+) | MG | | | F | S | 80 | 57d | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |
| Flexibox, Wythenshaw (+) | MG | | | F | S | 350 | ? | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |
| GEC Switchgear (+) | EE | | | F | S | 1,200 | 65d | | AUEW | C | */? | | |
| Walmsley (+) | ME | | | F | S | 1,200 | ? | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |
| F.Shaw | OM | | | F | S | 450 | 38d | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |
| F.Shaw | OM | | | ? | S | 80 | 38d | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |
| Bason & Sons | ME | | | F | S | 40 | 126d | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |
| Ferranti, Hollinwood (+) | EE | | | F | S | 2,300 | 22d | | AUEW | C | */? | | |
| " Cairo Mill (+) | EE | | | F | S | 670 | 22d | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |
| " Gem Mill (+) | EE | | | F | S | 650 | 17d | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |
| " Barry St. (+) | EE | | | F | S | 450 | 18d | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |
| " Moston (+) | EE | | | F | S | 900 | 11d | | AUEW | C | */? | | |
| Archibald Edmeston | ? | | | F | S | 150 | 46d | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |
| Hawker-Siddeley (+) | V | | | F | S | 1,250 | ? | | AUEW | ? | */1 | | |
| Simon-Vicars | ME | | | F | S | 280 | 15d | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |
| Viking | ? | | | F | S | 150 | ? | | AUEW/ETU | ? | */? | | |
| T.C.Thompson Ltd | ? | | | F | S | 100 | ? | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |
| Frederick Smith (+) | EE | | | F | S | 800 | 23d | | AUEW | C | */? | | |
| Record Electrical | EE | | | F | S | 270 | 42d | | AUEW | C | */? | | |
| Matthew Swain Ltd | ? | | | ? | S | 130 | 4d | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |
| Capper Neil (+) | ? | | | ? | S | 85 | 16d | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |

| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The 'Manchester' Engineering Occupations (cont...) | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Wingrove & Roger | ME | NW | Apr. | ? | S | 100 | ? | P | AUEW | ? | */? | * | * |
| William Neill | ? | | | F | S | 320 | ? | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |
| Eaton Corporation (+) | ? | | May | F | S | 700 | ? | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |
| Stanmore Engineering | V | | | ? | S | 120 | 40d | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |
| Mather & Platt (+) | ? | | | F | S | 1,800 | ? | | AUEW | C | */? | | |
| Appleton/Howard | ? | | | ? | S | 25 | ? | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |
| AEI Scientific (+) | EE | | | ? | S | 185 | ? | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |
| Glynwed Steel (+) | MM | | | F | S | 300 | ? | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |
| Barlow/Chidlaw | ? | | | F | S | 106 | ? | | AUEW | ? | */? | | |
| Allied National Engineering Dispute Occupations[3] | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Davey Manufacturing(+) (Sheffield) | ME | Y | Mar.72 | F | S | 1,000 | 28d | P | AUEW | ? | */1 | * | * |
| Hoe Crabtree(Leeds) | ? | Y | Apr. | F | S | 600 | ? | | AUEW | ? | ?/? | | |
| Vickers Crabtree(Leeds) | ? | Y | Apr. | F | S | 600 | ? | | AUEW | ? | ?/? | | |
| Tress Engineering (+) (Newcastle) | ME | N | May. | F | S | 250 | 6d | | AUEW | C | ?/1 | | |
| Molins - Deptford (+) | ME | SE | Jun. | F | S | 900 | 80d | | AUEW/ETU FTAT/CEU | M | ?/? | | |
| " - Kingston (+) | ME | SE | Jun. | F | S | 60 | 75d | | AUEW | ? | ?/? | | |
| " - Saunderton (+) | ME | SE | July. | F | S | 1,150 | 56d | | AUEW | ? | ?/? | | |
| Ransome, Hoffmann, Pollard (Newark) (+) | MG | EM | Mar 72 | P | S | 40 | ? | R | CAWU | F | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Extrusion Machines (Runcorn) | ME | NW | Mar. | F | S | 20 | 9m | R | AUEW | ? | ?/1 | ? | * |
| Ford (+) (Doncaster) | V | Y | Mar. | P | S | 200 | 17d | R | AUEW | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |

| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sextons & Sons (Norfolk) | L | EA | Mar.72 | F | W | 15 | 4m | R | NUFLAT/ ASTMS. | F | ~~x~~/1 | * | * |
| Fazakerly Hospital Site (Liverpool) | C | NW | Apr. | P | S | ? | ? | P | EEPTU | M | ?/? | ? | ? |
| BLMC - Cowley (+) | V | SE | Apr. | F | S | 2,300 | 14d | P | TGWU | M | */1 | ? | ? |
| Navan Furniture (Co.Neath) | TF | W | Apr. | F | W | 28 | 56d | R | ? | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| C.A.Parsons (+) (Kent) | EE | SE | May. | P | S | 50 | ? | O | TASS | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Dawson & Barfos (+) (Norfolk) | ME | EA | May. | P | S | ? | ? | R | ASTMS | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Bryant (+) 2 sites (Manchester - Market St) | C | NW | May | F | S | 160 | 16d | P | UCATT | M | ?/1 | ? | * |
| Bryant (+) (Birmingham-Woodgate V1) | C | WM | May | F | S | 150 | ? | O | UCATT | M | ?/1 | ? | * |
| Lovell (+) (London-Guildford St) | C | SE | May | P | S | 1 | 3d | O | TGWU | M | ?/1 | ? | * |
| AUEW Headquarters (London) | Mi | SE | May | P | S | ? | ? | O | AUEW | ? | ?/? | ? | * |
| Westinghouse Brake (+) (Chippenham) | V | SW | May | F | S | 2,000 | ? | P | AUEW/NSMM/ TGWU/ETU | ? | */1 | ? | ? |
| Garrard (+) (Swindon) | EE | SW | May | P | S | ? | 7d | O | ? | F | ?/? | ? | * |
| C.A.V. Ltd (+) (W.London) | V | SE | May | P | S | 120 | ? | P | AUEW | ? | */1 | ? | ? |
| C.Bryant (+) (Birmingham-Ringway) | C | WM | May | P | S | 3 | ? | O | UCATT | M | ?/1 | ? | * |

| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A.E.I. (+) (Sheffield) | EE | Y | Jun.72 | F | S | 650 | 13d | P | ? | C | */1 | ? | * |
| Chesterfield Tube Co. | MM | EM | June. | F | S | 1,300 | ? | P | ? | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| BR Workshops (Swindon) | V | SW | June | F | S | 500 | ? | O | ? | M | ?/? | ? | * |
| Charles McNeil (Glasgow) | MM | S | June. | F | S | 80 | 35d | P | AUEW/Blrmkrs | M | ?/1 | * | ? |
| Briant Colour Printing (S.E.London) | P | SE | June | F | W | 150 | 11m | R | NATSOPA/NGA AUEW/SLADE SOGAT | C | */1 | * | * |
| Plessey (+) (Upminster) | EE | SE | June. | P | S | 200 | 3d | R | ETU/AUEW | F | ?/? | ? | * |
| Stavely Machine Tools[4] (+) | ME | ? | June | ? | S | ? | ? | ? | ? | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| British Oil & Cake Mills (4) | F | ? | June | ? | S | ? | ? | ? | ? | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Peter Brotherhood (Peterborough) | ? | EA | June | P | S | ~700 | ? | P | AUEW | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Leadgate Engineering (+) (Co.Durham) | ME | N | June | F | S | 100 | 6m | R | AUEW | M | x/x | ? | ? |
| BLMC T.E.T. (+) (Basingstoke) | V | SE | Aug. | F | S | 1,200 | 70d | R | AUEW/TGWU APEX/ASTMS TASS/ETU NUVB/Blrmkrs NSSM. | C | ?/? | ? | * |
| Warmsley (+) (Wigan) | ME | NW | Sept. | F | S | 500 | ? | P | AUEW | ? | */1 | ? | ? |

| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| B.P. Chemicals (+) (Stroud). | Ch | SW | Sep.72 | F | S | 692 | 28d | R | GMWU/TGWU ETU/AUEW | C | x/x | ? | x |
| Gainsborough Cornford (Gt.Yarmouth) (+) | T | EA | Sept. | F | S | 300 | 42d | R | ASTW/AUEW/ ETU/ASTMS | C | ?/? | ? | * |
| Tube Investment (+) (Walsall) | MM | WM | Oct. | F | S | 1,400 | 4d | R | ASTMS/AUEW | C | */1 | * | * |
| Lucas CAV (+) (Liverpool) | ME | NW | Oct. | F | S | 1,100 | 3m | R | AUEW/APEX TGWU. | ? | */1 | ? | * |
| Sealand Hovercraft (Cumberland) | SM | N | Dec. | F | W | 81 | ? | R | AUEW | ? | ?/1 | ? | ? |
| Caterpillar Tractor Co (Co.Durham) | V | N | Dec. | P | S | 40 | ? | O | TASS | M | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Coles Cranes (+) (Sunderland) | ME | N | Jan.73 | F | S | 2,500 | 3m | R | AMS/TASS/APEX NUVB/Birmkrs GMWU/UPA/ETU AUEW/TGWU UCATT/NUSMW | C | ?/1 | * | * |
| Plessey (+) (Nottingham) | EE | EM | Jan. | P | S | 200 | 10d | P | ? | ? | ?/? | ? | * |
| Lucas CAV (+) (Liverpool) | ME | NW | Jan. | P | S | 300 | ? | R | ? | ? | ?/? | ? | * |
| Westland Helicopters (+) (Yeovil) | V | SW | Feb. | F | S | 850 | ? | P | TASS | ? | */1 | ? | ? |
| Cubitt (+) (London-Worlds End site) | C | SE | Feb. | P | S | 1 | 2d | O | UCATT | M | ?/1 | ? | * |
| McAlpine (+) (Strand site, London) | C | SE | Feb | P | S | 150 | ? | O | UCATT | M | ?/1 | ? | * |

| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| L.Gardner & Sons (+) (Eccles) | ME | NW | Mar.73 | P | S | 200 | 24d | P | AUEW | ? | ?/? | ? | * |
| Ford (+) (Dagenham) | V | SE | Mar. | P | S | 200 | ? | P | ? | ? | */1 | ? | * |
| Tillotson Print Co. (+) (Liverpool) | P | NW | Mar. | F | S | 370 | 42d | R | SOGAT | C | ?/1 | ? | * |
| Cammell Laird (Liverpool) | SM | NW | Mar. | P | S | 220 | ? | R | ? | M | */1 | ? | ? |
| Aberdare Cables (+) (Glamorgan) | EE | W | Apr. | F | S | 180 | 28d | P | NUGMW | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Bason & Sons (Stockport) | ME | NW | Apr. | F | S | 20 | 29d | R | AUEW | M | */1 | * | * |
| Norton Villiers (Andover) | V | SE | Apr. | F | S | 110 | ? | R | AUEW/TGWU | ? | ?/? | ? | * |
| B.A.C. (+) (Surrey) | V | SE | May. | P | S | ? | ? | O | ? | ? | */1 | ? | ? |
| Taylor Woodrow (+) (Guildford St-London) | C | SE | May | P | S | 1 | 2d | O | UCATT/TGWU | M | ?/1 | ? | * |
| Bowden Cables (+) (Llanelli) | V | W | June | F | S | 250 | ? | P | AUEW | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Camco (Belfast) | ME | NI | June | F | S | 300 | 7 | P | AUEW | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Hawker-Siddely (+) (Bolton) | V | NW | June | F | S | 1,800 | 3d | O | AUEW/ETU GMWU/UCATT TGWU | C | ?/1 | ? | * |
| RCA -(U.S. airforce research station) (Orford Ness) (+) | PA | EA | July. | P | S | ? | ? | R | ASTMS | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |

| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Adwest Engineering (+) (Reading) | V | SE | Aug.73 | F | S | 600 | 28d | R | AUEW/ASTMS TASS/APEX | ? | ?/1 | ? | ? |
| Seiko Ltd (N.W.London) | IE | SE | Aug. | F | S | 15 | ? | O | TASS | C | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Triumph Meriden (Coventry) | V | WM | Oct. | F | S | 1,750 | 14m | R | TGWU/AUEW NUSM/ETU | C | ?/? | ? | * |
| Hick Hargreaves & Co (Bolton) | ? | NW | Oct. | F | S | 250 | ? | P | AUEW | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Baynard Press (+) (Clerkenwell, London) | P | SE | Nov. | F | S | 200 | 1d | R | NATSOPA/ SOGAT | C | ?/? | ? | * |
| ITT Maclaren (+) (Glasgow) | ME | S | Dec. | F | S | 320 | 3m | P | AUEW | C | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Timex (Dundee) | IE | S | Feb.74 | F | S | 5,000 | ? | P | AUEW | C | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Strachans Engineering(+) (Hants) | V | SE | Mar. | F | S | 200 | 50d | R | AUEW/NUSMW TGWU/ASTMS | ? | ?/1 | ? | ? |
| Shell (+) (Ellesmere Port) | Cl | NW | Apr. | P | S | ? | ? | O | CEU | M | */1 | ? | ? |
| European Ferries (+) (The Cerdic Ferry) | TC | SE | Apr. | F | S | 14 | ? | R | NUS | M | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Bryant (+) (Birmingham -Poly.site) | C | WM | Apr. | P | S | 38 | ? | P | ? | M | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Scottish Daily Express(+) (Glasgow) | P | S | Apr. | F | S | 500 | 1y | R | NGA/NUJ/SGA NATSOPA/ETU AUEW/APEX | C | ?/1 | * | * |
| Strathclyde University (Glasgow) | PS | S | Apr. | P | S | ? | ? | P | ? | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |

| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Plessey (+) (Nottingham) | EE | EM | Jun.74 | F | S | 5,500 | 14d | P | ASTMS/TASS TGWU | C | ?/? | ? | * |
| Rolls Royce (+) (Coventry) | V | WM | July | F | S | 1,000 | ? | P | ? | ? | */1 | ? | * |
| Gloster Saro (+) (Gloucester) | V | SW | July | F | S | 40 | ? | R | TASS | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| I.P.D. (Liverpool) | EE | NW | July | F | W | 1,200 | 4m | R | TGWU/AUEW/ETU APEX/TASS ASTMS | C | */1 | * | * |
| De Lane Lea (+) (W.London) | Mi | SE | Aug. | F | S | 60 | ? | R | ACTT/NATKE | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Propytex (Hartlepool) | OM | N | Aug. | F | W | 350 | 23w | R | AUEW/TGWU | C | x/1 | * | * |
| Dresser Europe (Bracknell) | ME | SE | Sept. | F | S | 300 | ? | P | AUEW/ETU | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Courtaulds (+) (Co.Durham) | T | N | Oct. | F | S | 1,600 | 6w | R | NUDBTW | C | x/1 | ? | ? |
| SEI (+) (Heywood) | EE | NW | Oct. | P | S | 400 | ? | P | AUEW | F | ?/? | ? | ? |
| F.C.Bloomfield (Chester/Telegraph Hlds) | C | NW | Oct. | F | S | 40 | ? | R | ? | M | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Hawker-Siddelley (+) | V | | Oct. | P | W | | | R | AUEW/TASS | | | | |
| Woodford | | NW | | | | 3,000 | ? | | ASTMS | C | */1 | * | * |
| Chadderton | | NW | | | | | ? | | | | */1 | * | * |
| Hatfield | | SE | | | | | ? | | | | */1 | ? | * |
| Brough | | Y | | | | | ? | | | | */1 | ? | * |
| + 3 other plants. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Perkins (+) (Peterborough) | V | EA | Oct. | P | S | 30 | ? | P | ? | M | ?/1 | ? | ? |

| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Honeywell (+) (Lanarkshire) | EE | S | Nov.74 | F | S | 800 | ? | R | AUEW/TASS/ETU NUSMW/ASTMS APEX | C | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Plessey (+) (Swindon) | EE | SW | Dec. | P | S | 100 | 2m | R | AUEW | F | ?/? | ? | * |
| Scott's Bakery (Bootle) | F | NW | Dec. | F | S | 17 | ? | O | Bakers' Un. | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Pochin (+) (Manchester-Oxford Rd) | C | NW | Jan.75 | P | S | 70 | 13d | R | ? | M | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Educational Audio Visual (North London) | Mi | SE | Feb. | F | S | 7 | ? | O | NUJ | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Imperial Typewriters (+) (Hull) | ME | Y | Feb. | F | S | 250 | 5m | R | TGWU/AUEW ASTMS | C | ?/? | * | ? |
| Cammell Laird (+) Building Sub-contractor - Peter Lind. (Liverpool) | C | NW | Feb. | P | S | 250 | 6m | R | TGWU/UCATT CEU | M | */1 | ? | * |
| Smith-Hutton (Dundee) | SM | S | Mar. | P | W | 40 | 7d | R | AUEW | M | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Jarrow Tube Works (Jarrow) | MM | N | Mar. | F | S | 40 | ? | R | AUEW | ? | ?/1 | ? | ? |
| Purma (+) (Glamorgan) | MG | W | Mar. | F | S | 80 | ? | R | AUEW | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Crossfield Electronics (N.London) (+) | EE | SE | mar. | F | S | 30 | 49d | R | AUEW/TASS NUSMW/ETU | C | ?/1 | ? | ? |
| Laurence Scott (+) (Manchester) | EE | NW | Apr. | F | S | 130 | 7d | P | APEX | C | */1 | * | * |
| Ford (+) (Swansea) | V | W | Apr. | F | S | 2,000 | 2d | O | ? | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |

| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Stretford Council (Manchester) | PA | NW | Apr.75 | F | S | 23 | ? | O | ? | M | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Ford (+) (Dagenham) | V | SE | Apr. | P | S | 100 | ? | R | ? | ? | */1 | ? | ? |
| Coles Cranes (+) (Darlington) | ME | N | Apr. | F | S | 60 | 7d | R | ? | ? | ?/? | ? | * |
| Mabbutt & Johnson (E.London) | P | SE | May | F | S | 40 | ? | P | ? | ? | ?/? | ? | * |
| Kromberg & Schubert (+) (Clydebank) | EE | S | May. | F | S | 12 | ? | R | AUEW | F | ?/? | ? | * |
| Massey Ferguson (+) (Coventry) | V | WM | May | P | S | 310 | 35d | P | AUEW | ? | */1 | ? | ? |
| Lucas (+) (Wolverhampton) | V | WM | May. | F | S | 1,400 | ? | O | AUEW/TASS | ? | ?/? | ? | * |
| Argyle Ship & Boat Bld. (Glasgow) | SM | S | May. | F | W | 41 | ? | R | ? | C | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Gravesend & Dartford Reporter (Kent) | P | SE | May. | P | S | 28 | ? | O | NGA | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Bainbridge (Co.Durham) | CF | N | May. | F | S | 30 | 2m | R | NUGMW | F | x/x | x | x |
| Robert Todd & Sons Ltd (Carlisle) | T | N | May | F | S | 108 | 12d | R | NUGMW | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Henry Boot (+) (Coney St. site York) | C | Y | May | P | S | 8 | ? | O | ? | M | */1 | ? | ? |
| Lamson Paragon Ltd (+) (Liverpool) (4) | ? | NW | JUNE | F | S | 160 | ? | R | ? | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Keith Blackman (+) N.London) | EE | SE | June | F | S | 350 | ? | P | TASS | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |

| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| B.A.C. (+) Hurn[4] | V | SW | ?'75 | ? | S | ? | ? | ? | ? | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| B.A.C. (+) Weybridge[4] | V | SE | ? | ? | S | 700 | ? | ? | ? | ? | */1 | ? | ? |
| GEC- Elliot Process[4] Instruments Ltd (London) | EE | SE | ? | ? | S | 80 | ? | ? | ? | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Howard Rotavator Co. (+) (Halesworth) (4) | ME | EA | ? | F | S | 500 | ? | ? | ? | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Lyons Tetly[4] (+) (Bletchley) | F | SE | ? | F | S | 340 | ? | ? | ? | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Magnesium Elektron[4] (Manchester) | ? | NW | ? | F | S | 400 | ? | ? | ? | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Russell Kirby[4] (Liverpool) | ? | NW | ? | ? | S | 40 | ? | ? | ? | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| NVT (Wolverhampton) | V | WM | Aug. | F | S | 1,600 | 3m | R | AUEW/TGWU ASTMS/TASS | C | ?/? | ? | * |
| Sealed Motor Corp. (+) (Somerset) | ME | SW | Aug. | F | S | 800 | ? | R | AUEW | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Corah (+) (Aberbargoed) | CF | W | Aug. | F | S | 400 | 9d | R | NUTGW | F | ?/1 | ? | ? |
| Decca (+) (S.London) | EE | SE | Aug. | ? | S | 70 | ? | R | ? | F | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Cammell Laird (+) (Liverpool) | SM | NW | Sept. | P | S | 100 | 3d | O | Boilermakers | M | */1 | ? | * |
| Masson Scott Thrissell (Bristol) | ME | SW | Sept | F | S | 1,000 | 2d | R | ? | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Sumlock-Anita Ealing | EE | SE | Sept. | F | S | 15 | ? | R | ASTMS | ? | ?/1 | ? | ? |
| Thornton Heath | | SE | | | | 12 | | | | | | | |
| Clerkenwell | | SE | | | | 27 | | | | | | | |
| Southampton | | SE | | | | 7 | | | | | | | |

| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sumlock-Anita (Cont...) | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bristol | EE | SW | Sep.75 | F | S | 12 | ? | R | ASTMS | ? | ?/1 | ? | ? |
| Plymouth | | SW | | | | 3 | | | | | | | |
| Cardiff | | W | | | | 6 | | | | | | | |
| Swansea | | W | | | | 3 | | | | | | | |
| Finchley | | SE | | | | 9 | | | | | | | |
| Ilford | | SE | | | | 8 | | | | | | | |
| Norwich | | EA | | | | 7 | | | | | | | |
| Birmingham | | WM | | | | 14 | | | | | | | |
| Kenilworth | | WM | | | | 6 | | | | | | | |
| Leicester | | EM | | | | 7 | | | | | | | |
| Nottingham | | EM | | | | 6 | | | | | | | |
| Glasgow | | S | | | | 10 | | | | | | | |
| Carlisle | | N | | | | 2 | | | | | | | |
| Edinburgh | | S | | | | 7 | | | | | | | |
| Dundee | | S | | | | 2 | | | | | | | |
| Aberdeen | | S | | | | 2 | | | | | | | |
| Newcastle | | N | | | | 7 | | | | | | | |
| Middlesbro' | | N | | | | 3 | | | | | | | |
| Leeds | | Y | | | | 9 | | | | | | | |
| Hull | | Y | | | | 4 | | | | | | | |
| Sheffield | | Y | | | | 7 | | | | | | | |
| Manchester | | NW | | | | 11 | | | | | | | |
| Stoke | | NW | | | | 4 | | | | | | | |
| Liverpool | | NW | | | | 8 | | | | | | | |
| Preston | | NW | | | | 7 | | | | | | | |
| Belfast | | NI | | | | 5 | | | | | | | |
| (Dublin) | | (Eire) | | | | (10) | | | | | | | |
| (Cork ) | | (Eire) | | | | ( 2) | | | | | | | |
| Ever Ready (+) (Co.Durham) | EE | N | Sept. | F | S | ? | ? | R | ? | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Balfour Darwin (+) (Sheffield) | MG | Y | Sept. | F | S | 360 | 56d | R | AUEW | C | */1 | ? | ? |
| BLMC - AEC (+) (Southall) | V | SE | Oct. | F | S | 2,500 | ? | R | ? | ? | */1 | ? | ? |
| BLMC - Light Vans (+) (Birmingham) | V | WM | Oct | ? | S | 600 | ? | O | ? | ? | */1 | ? | ? |

| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Personna (+) (Glasgow) | MG | S | Oct.75 | F | S | 280 | 70d | R | AUEW/TASS | ? | ?/1 | ? | ? |
| Threatened (th) & Token Actions | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| B.S.A. (Birmingham) | V | WM | Oct.71 | F | W | 4,500 | th | R | NUVB | ? | ?/? | * | ? |
| C.I.S. (See Above) | | | Nov.71 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Stamford Wharf (Blackfriars) | TC | SE | Jan.72 | P | W[5] | 120 | ? | R | ? | M | ?/1 | ? | * |
| C.A.Parsons (+) (Newcastle) | EE | N | Jan.72 | P | W[6] | 1,900 | ? | R | TASS/APEX | C | ?/1 | ? | * |
| Courtaulds (+) (Flintshire) | T | W | Jan. | F | S | ? | th | R | ? | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Shepperton Film Studios | Mi | SE | Mar. | F | S | ? | th | R | ACTT | ? | ?/1 | ? | ? |
| Redpath Dorman Long (S.E.London) | SM | SE | June | F | S | ? | th | R | ? | M | ?/1 | ? | ? |
| Tube Investment (+) (Walsall) | MM | WM | June | P | S | 135 | 2h | R | ASTMS | C | */1 | * | * |
| Wickman Lang (Renfrewshire) | ? | S | July | F | W | 400 | th | R | AUEW | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Bryant (+) 25 sites (Birmingham) | C | WM | Jan.73 | F | S | 2,500 | th | O | UCATT | M | ?/1 | ? | * |
| Dunlop (+) (Birmingham) | OM | WM | Mar.73 | F | S | 1,500 | 24h | O | ASTMS/APEX/ TASS | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| United Liverpool Hospitals (10 hospitals) | PS | NW | Apr. | P | S | 1,000 | 2h | P | NUPE | C | ?/? | ? | ? |

| | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Manchester Regional Hospital Board (Manchester) | PS | NW | Apr.73 | P | S | 300 | 2h | P | NUPE | C | ?/? | ? | ? |
| CAV (+) (W.London) | V | SE | Sep.73 | F | S | 3,000 | th | P | AUEW | ? | */1 | ? | ? |
| C.Tinling & Co (+) (Prescot) | P | NW | Sep.73 | F | S | 800 | th | R | SOGAT | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| BLMC (+) (Cowley) | V | SE | Jan.74 | P | W? | 500 | ? | O | ? | ? | */1 | ? | * |
| Hoover (+) (W.London) | EE | SE | Oct.74 | F | S | 1,000 | th | P | NUGMW/AUEW | C | ?/? | ? | ? |
| T.G.W.U. Glasgow Office | V | S | Dec. | F | S | ? | 2h | P | TGWU | M | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Vauxhall (+) (Ellesmere Port) | V | NW | Apr.75 | F | S | 1,000 | ? | | | ? | */1 | ? | * |
| Milk Marketing Board (Devon) | F | SW | Sep.75 | F | W | 400 | th | ? | ? | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |
| Standard Telephones (+) (Larne) | EE | NI | Nov.75 | F | S | 800 | 48h | R | ? | ? | ?/? | ? | ? |

NOTES

1. The AUEW is almost always refered to in these cases. That is not to say that they were the only union involved although it is likely that they played a leading role often enough,
2. See footnote 2 for Table 1.
3. These occupations along with those in the Greater Manchester Area were all part of a nationwide pay battle in the Engineering industry.
4. Such cases were referenced by Metra, 1975 but very few details are given.
5. This case involved the imposition of a work sharing scheme upon the management.

NOTES (Cont...)

6. This case involved workers imposing a manpower hours arrangement to suit themselves.

7. This case involved workers refusing to be laid off for 2 days a week during the 3-day week crisis.

**This table has been compiled using 'Morning Star' reports; 'Labour Research'; 'The Times'; 'Socialist Worker'; and local press reports. With the additional help of questionnaires, interviews, study visits and personal contact.

No. of cases available in each category.

A = 198 B = 177 C = 196 D = 198 (191 mention month/ 7 do not) E = 174

F = 198 G = 184 H = 102 I = 189 J = 156 K = 87 L = 95/67

M = 79 N = 114.

rather than the first BCP action, because it is this 'work-in' that was the inspiration for the subsequent flood of such actions. Where a situation has arisen where workers from different sites of the same company have occupied in concert to achieve a common end I have grouped them together under a single case heading[1]. Thus, although there are one hundred and ninety-eight occupation[2] situations listed there were at least two hundred and thirty-eight seperate sites occupied.

The table also lists those cases where an occupation was threatened (at least 10 cases) or where a token, protest occupation occurred (11 cases); in total these involved workers from 45 different workplaces. Thus, over the period July 1971 to December 1975 there were nearly 220 actual or threatened occupations and protest occupations involving workers from no less than 283 different workplaces.

If we look at Table 2 below we can see that at no time since the UCS work-in has there been a time when an occupation was not in progress in some part of the country.

Table 2.

Occupations in Progress July '71 - Dec.'75.

| Date. | New occ.s begining. | Total occ.s in progress. | Date. | New occ.s begining. | Total occ.s in progress. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jul. '71 | 1 | 1 | Jan. '72 | 6 | 8 |
| Aug. | 0 | 1 | Feb. | 1 | 4 |
| Sept. | 1 | 2 | Mar. | 27 | 28 |
| Oct. | 2 | 4 | Apr. | 29 | 47 |
| Nov. | 1 | 4 | May. | 18 | 44 |
| Dec. | 0 | 4 | June. | 12 | 20 |

1. This involves the following cases:- Bryants (May '72) where 2 sites were linked together for a common pay agreement; Hawker-Siddeley (Oct.'74) where 7 sites continued to work on a joint project which management wanted to have work stopped on; and Sumlock Anita (Sept.'75) where 30 sites in the U.K., took action against company redundancy policy. The UCS work-in, ofcourse, involved workers from 4 different shipyards in the same battle. Excluded from such a grouping are the Ferranti and GEC workers involved in the national engineering pay claim. The battle was such that it was fought at individual workplace level; with each workforce attempting to get their own best deal. It so happened that such actions became widespread and concurrent.
2. Such figures can only be rough estimates - see Chapter 3.

Table 2. (Cont...)

| Date. | New occ.s begining. | Total occ.s in progress. | Date. | New occ.s begining. | Total occ.s in progress. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jul. '72 | 1 | 10 | Mar. '74 | 1 | 3 |
| Aug. | 1 | 9 | Apr. | 5 | 7 |
| Sept. | 3 | 11 | May | 0 | 3 |
| Oct. | 2 | 9 | Jun. | 1 | 3 |
| Nov. | 0 | 5 | Jul. | 3 | 5 |
| Dec. | 2 | 6 | Aug. | 2 | 5 |
| | | | Sept. | 1 | 5 |
| Jan. '73 | 3 | 5 | Oct. | 5 | 9 |
| Feb. | 3 | 4 | Nov. | 1 | 7 |
| Mar. | 4 | 6 | Dec. | 2 | 6 |
| Apr. | 3 | 7 | | | |
| May | 2 | 6 | Jan. '75 | 2 | 4 |
| June | 3 | 4 | Feb. | 4 | 6 |
| Jul. | 1 | 1 | Mar. | 5 | 8 |
| Aug. | 1 | 1 | Apr. | 6 | 10 |
| Sept. | 0 | 1 | May | 10 | 13 |
| Oct. | 2 | 2 | Jun. | 4 | 9 |
| Nov. | 1 | 2 | Jul. | 0 | 3 |
| Dec. | 1 | 2 | Aug. | 4 | 5 |
| | | | Sept. | 5 | 6 |
| Jan. '74 | 0 | 2 | Oct. | 3 | 5 |
| Feb. | 1 | 3 | Nov. | 0 | 3 |
| | | | Dec. | 0 | 1 |

We can see from the table, however, that there were a few months when no new occupation originated, i.e., in nine of the fifty-four months[1].

Regional variation: Looking at table 2.1 we can see that there was quite a bit of regional variation.

Table 2.1

Regional variations in the development and timing of occupations.

(a) Chronological development by region.

1. Scotland (UCS)
2. Yorkshire & Humberside (River Don)
3. Wales (Allis Chalmers)
4. North West (Fisher Bendix)
5. East Midlands (Leicester Photo)
6. East Anglia (Sextons)
7. South East (BLMC - Cowley)
8. West Midlands (Bryant - Woodgate site)
9. North (Tress)
10. South West (Westinghouse Brake)
11. Northern Ireland (Camco)

1. In 3 of those months there was either a threatened or token occupation.

Table 2.1 (Cont...)

(b) Occupations in progress: regional variations

| | S | Y | W | NW | EM | EA | SE | WM | N | SW | NI | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 971 Jul. | * | | | | | | | | | | | 1971 |
| Aug. | * | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sept. | * | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Oct. | * | * | | | | | | | | | | |
| Nov. | * | * | | | | | | | | | | |
| Dec. | * | * | | | | | | | | | | |
| 972 Jan. | * | | * | * | | | | | | | | 1972 |
| Feb. | * | | | * | * | | | | | | | |
| Mar. | * | * | | * | * | * | | | | | | |
| Apr. | * | * | * | * | | * | * | | | | | |
| May | * | | * | * | | * | * | * | * | * | | |
| Jun. | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | | * | * | | |
| Jul. | * | | | * | | * | * | | * | | | |
| Aug. | * | | | * | | | * | | * | | | |
| Sept. | * | | | * | | * | * | | * | | | |
| Oct. | * | | | * | | * | * | * | * | * | | |
| Nov. | | | | * | | * | * | | * | | | |
| Dec. | | | | * | | | * | | * | | | |
| 973 Jan. | | | | * | * | | * | | * | | | 1973 |
| Feb. | | | | * | | | * | | * | * | | |
| Mar. | | | | * | | | * | | * | | | |
| Apr. | | | * | * | * | | * | | * | | | |
| May. | | | * | * | | | * | | | | | |
| Jun. | | | * | * | | | | | | | * | |
| Jul. | | | | | | * | | | | | | |
| Aug. | | | | | | | * | | | | | |
| Sept. | | | | | | | * | | | | | |
| Oct. | | | | * | | | | * | | | | |
| Nov. | | | | | | | * | * | | | | |
| Dec. | * | | | | | | | * | | | | |
| 974 Jan. | * | | | | | | | * | | | | 1974 |
| Feb. | * | | | | | | | * | | | | |
| Mar. | * | | | | | | * | * | | | | |
| Apr. | * | | | * | | | * | * | | | | |
| May. | * | | | | | | * | * | | | | |
| Jun. | * | | | | * | | | * | | | | |
| Jul. | * | | | * | | | | * | | * | | |
| Aug. | * | | | * | | | * | * | * | | | |
| Sept. | * | | | * | | | * | * | * | | | |
| Oct. | * | | | * | | * | | * | * | | | |
| Nov. | * | | | * | | | | * | * | | | |
| Dec. | * | | | * | | | | * | * | * | | |
| 75 Jan. | * | | | * | | | | | | * | | 1975 |
| Feb. | * | * | | * | | | * | | | * | | |
| Mar. | * | * | * | * | | | * | | * | | | |
| Apr. | * | * | * | * | | | * | | * | | | |
| May. | * | * | | * | | | * | * | * | | | |
| Jun. | | * | | * | | | * | * | * | * | | |
| Jul. | | * | | * | | | | | | | | |
| Aug. | | | * | * | | | * | * | | * | | |
| Sept. | | * | | * | | | | * | * | * | | |
| Oct. | * | * | | | | | * | * | | | | |
| Nov. | * | * | | | | | | * | | | | |
| Dec. | * | | | | | | | | | | | |

For more than two-thirds of the whole four and a half year period an occupation was occurring in Scotland the birthplace of the modern occupation. This was also true of the North West region and gives the lie to the fact that few occupations would be counted in this region but for the mass engineering pay battle. Just over half the time period an occupation was in progress in the South East, and over forty percent of the time this was true for the West Midlands and Northern regions. In the Yorkshire and Humberside region the number and duration of occupations was such that a good deal less than one-third of the period saw any such action in progress. In Wales, East Anglia and the South West the figure is below one-fifth of the total period; in the East Midlands it is only just above ten percent and for Northern Ireland only one case is recorded (or just under two-percent of the period).

The Character & Pattern of Workplace Occupations.

Various attempts have been made to divide workplace occupations into distinguishable categories. As pointed out earlier[1] Chadwick (1973) refers to "defensive" and "offensive" sit-ins:

> "The Manchester sit-ins broke new ground in one important respect. They were not defensive but offensive. The U.C.S. and the other (redundancy) disputes . . . took place in situations where large-scale redundancies were threatened. Under those circumstances the labour force has nothing to lose and everything to gain from occupation. There the weapon was used to mount desperate last-ditch struggles in defence of the right to work. To occupy one's place of work when one's boss decides to steal one's job is a reaction quite different from the one experienced by the Manchester engineers. It is true that there had been many redundancies in their industry locally and that more were rumoured. It is also the case that the demands for shorter hours and longer holidays were made partly to alleviate this problem, but these were only seen as long-term and secondary matters. They do not alter the main point that here, for the first time in recent British industrial history, the sit-in was being used offensively as a means of attack upon stubborn employers" (2)

---

1. See Chapter 1, pp.21-22.

2. Chadwick, pp.113-114.

Teulings (1972) likewise attempts to distinguish the Manchester sit-ins from previous redundancy occupations:

"...the Manchester sit-ins form a second wave of factory occupations in Britain. The first wave, in January and February (1971) involved eight or nine factories all over Britain, and took place under the impact of the Upper Clyde workers' work-in at Glasgow ... The Manchester sit-ins, however, although they are definitely inspired by this same model of successful action, are nevertheless totally different from the previous ones, and nothing could be more wrong than making comparisons without taking notice of the changed contexts of these actions . . .In Manchester, sit-ins are used, not as a defensive tactic against the background of factory closure or collective redundancies, as a struggle in the defense of 'the right to work', but as a weapon in a process of wage negotiations, and in the framework of a new union policy of decentralised bargaining"(1).

Keyser and Hemingway (1976), on the other hand, come out with an attempt at categorisation which appears to be a mishmash of the previous two. In the first instance they attempt to distinguish "redundancy" from "industrial relations" sit-ins:

"According to the nature of the issue giving rise to the dispute, there are basically two types:

- redundancy sit-ins, where the occupation is in response to a management announcement of a partial or total closure
- industrial relations sit-ins, where the occupation is in response to a breakdown in negotiations in the traditional collective bargaining process" (2)

They then go on to provide sub-categorisations:

"Each of these major categories encloses particular sub-types within it... There are essentially two types of redundancy sit-in, according to the response of the workers and how they choose to fight..... These are:

- defensive sit-ins. Here the workers resist a redundancy situation with the aim of maintaining the status quo. The threat to employment may be either the total closure of a plant or a partial closure in which a percentage of the work force is asked to leave. In either case, the aim is to force the company to continue to operate as it always has and to preserve in being the threatened jobs.
- assertive sit-ins. These only occur in a situation of total closure, where the work force seizes the factory or premises with the intention to save jobs by putting into operation alternative proposals for employment, e.g., proposals for a workers' co-operative, or ... for a viable enterprise under different arrangements."(3)

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1. Unpublished paper, p.1.
2. p.9.
3. p.10.

"Although the worker sit-in first made its name in Britain as a tactic to resist redundancy, perhaps its greatest and most interesting use is now as an extension of the strike weapon in the day-to-day process of collective bargaining.....

One can discern three forms of the tactic:

- the sit-in protest
- the total occupation
- the strategic seizure."(1).

Several issues are raised by these different attempts at categorisation. Chadwick, a little confusingly, raises two issues or two levels of issue. At one level he appears to be distinguishing between the degree of challenge to the capitalist system raised by one group of occupations as opposed to another. At another level, conceptually concerning degrees of difference within the confines of the industrial relations system, he appears to be distinguishing between those actions which are responses to management attack on working conditions (i.e., job losses) and those which take the offensive and attempt to gain improvements from management (i.e., improved wages). Keyser and Hemingway are much more clearly operating conceptually in terms of an acceptance of existing industrial relations arrangements and are largely in the business of empiricist categorisation. Thus, we do not learn anything about the sociological origins of the occupation phenomenon nor their social significance, nor even the effect that the difference in form makes upon the consciousness of the workforce involved. They simply divide occupations according to the style they took and the particular industrial end which they aimed to achieve. Implicitly, however, their categories do raise the question of whether there can be discerned any difference in impact a) upon the consciousness of those involved and b) upon the consciousness of other groups of workers, according to the industrial origin of the dispute and the style the action takes.

Teulings is much more concerned to address himself to this latter problem of consciousness. In regard to 'a' he states that,

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1. p.36.

"The Manchester sit-ins do not have much of that symbolic meaning attached to them of the worker at last laying hands on the Sacred Property of the Entrepreneur,"(1).

In regard to 'b' Teulings has this to say,

"A second factor of strategic importance is that the Manchester sit-ins do not provide a strong rallying point, do not have a strong mobilization capacity for the labour movement as a whole",(2).

A radical challenge? Teulings and Chadwick's positions would appear to be contradictory in regard to the Manchester engineering occupations. Both describe redundancy occupations as "defensive" but Chadwick does so in order to provide a contrast to a supposedly more challenging type of occupation while Teulings is concerned to provide a contrast to a supposedly less challenging type.

Both sight their aims on the question of consciousness. Teulings, as pointed out above, claims that the Manchester sit-ins lacked a certain "symbolic meaning":

"The in itself justified claim that "This is mine as much as it is yours" which seems so self-evident in cases of closures or massive redundancies, loses some of its persuasive strength and moral appeal when the issue at stake is not so much an "all or nothing", but a "more or less" question. The sit-in is reduced to ... an "inside form of picketing" ... (and) the results . . . cannot be as dramatic, neither in terms of cash, nor in terms of motivational power - its politicizing effect" (3).

Chadwick tends not to quibble with the details but does come up with a very different assessment of the outcome of such actions:

"Some sections of the left-wing press have condemned the whole Manchester campaign as a defeat for the unions. This is only true insofar as very few of their immediate demands were met and in that also many internal weaknesses were exposed. But . . . one ought to recognise that a fundamental change has been brought about in the minds of thousands of people who were directly involved in this experience. Respect for bourgeoise property has been questioned and the idea of workers' control has taken new dimensions"(4).

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1. P.7
2. P.8
3. P.7
4. P.123.

The contrast between these two assessments is quite marked and indeed the same is so when they are considering the wider impact upon consciousness of the Manchester sit-ins. Teulings states that,

> "The external mobilization-effect, so manifest on previous (redundancy) occasions, is almost totally absent in Manchester. No stories in the press, no solidarity action from other unions, no fund raising activities. . . . It is significant that there were no massive demos to show the inter-dependence if not the solidarity of the separate sit-ins. . .
>
> The Manchester sit-ins remain . . . on the whole an isolated experience . . . And although one has to agree that to the workers directly involved it might have been an invaluable learning experience, one cannot dismiss the feeling that a wider potential for social mobilization has not been tapped" (1).

For Chadwick, on the other hand, the impact of the actions were such that,

> "The next generation of shop stewards will have all of this behind them and will be far less inhibited in their decision taking" (2).

And, as stated above, he feels that these occupations have developed the idea of "workers' control" to a new level.

If we examine the actual events of the Manchester sit-ins we can see that, in detail at least, the reality is somewhat closer to that portrayed by Chadwick than by Teulings. A critical problem with Teulings' assessment, furthermore, lies in his attempt to divorce the Manchester actions from the wider political climate of the time. When he warns us against "making comparisons without taking notice of the changed contexts" of the different types of occupation[3] he is making a most fundamental error in directing us to the particular dispute origin of individual occupations while neglecting the wider context in which both types of action occurred.

That wider political/industrial context has been described in detail elsewhere[4]. It is a context which includes a massive number of industrial

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1. pp.8-9.
2. pp.123-134.
3. p.1
4. See chapters 2,3, and 5.

disputes, the advent of workplace occupations and a widespread number of political strikes. Within key unions - the Engineering Union in particular - this militancy found expression in leftward shifts in union elections for leadership.

With the onset of the 1970s engineer workers in the Greater Manchester Area were to the forefront in the election of left officials in the Engineering Union[1]. This was a strong base for the Communist/Left Labour 'Broad Left' in the Engineering Union; a Union that had moved to the left with the election of Hugh Scanlon as President in the late 1960s with the help of that Broad Left machine[2]. Beyond the Union itself a large number of its Manchester members were associated with the LCDTU and had taken part in the political strikes of March 1971. Many of those same workers had been industrially militant as well.

In terms of the development of workplace occupations the North West Region and engineering workers figure large. As early as 1969 there had been the threatened action of the G.E.C. workers in the region; an action inspired from within the then A.E.F. The UCS work-in found engineering union militants to the fore - and this was not lost on their Manchester collegues as the Broad Left machine was activated in support. Engineers were to the fore in the next three occupations of 1971 and the first three of 1972. Indeed, of the first nine occupations of 1972, i.e., pre-Manchester sit-ins, seven were in the North West region.

When the spring of 1972 approached unemployment in the Region reached five percent[3]. Over the period 1959-72 the Region had experienced

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1. The Left Labour Executive member Bob Wright represented this Region; the secretary of the CONFED was a leading member of the CPGB (John Tocher); other CPGB member included Bernard Regan the Stockport District Secretary of the AUEW, Bob Williams the Oldham Dist. AUEW Secretary, Peter Bramah the Bury District AUEW Secretary, Bernard Panter and Stan Cole respectively the Secretary and President of the Manchester District AUEW.
2. For an understanding of the power of the Broad Left see R.Undy, 1979.
3. At this time the national (GB) figure was 4.1% and in England only the North Region had a higher figure.

a net loss of 100,000 jobs - mostly male employment in manufacturing industry[1]. Already that year six of the Region's occupations had concerned redundancy and had made an impact upon the thinking of North West engineers[2]. On the wages front the earnings of those in the various parts of the engineering industry as a whole had risen more slowly over the new decade, than those of almost every other group of manufacturing workers[3].

These were the kind of pressures confronting the Manchester engineering union shop stewards as they met on Monday 13th March. They were pressures that were to confront one of the most politicized groups of workers in Britain at that time. Within the Union nationally it had been agreed that the Union claim[4] be fought on a plant by plant basis. This followed a breakdown in national negotiations, between the CONFED and the EEF, in December 1971. However, the extent to which Manchester engineers were industrially/politically advanced can be seen in the fact that the March 13th meeting, attended by 1,000 shop stewards, opted to fight the claim on a district wide approach;

"There was angry condemnation by some of the stewards of their national leadership's failure to take up this challenge on a national scale"(5).

The meeting ended with a resolution for a ban on overtime and piecework and a work-to-rule - "only a handful voted against"[6], and "one militant member suggested" that "If the employers come back with lock-outs, we will respond with sit-ins"[7].

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1. R.W.Shakespeare, 'The Times', 7th.Nov.'75.
2. "The psychological effect of the Churchill (occupation) upon upon engineering workers in the area was immensely important . . .". Chadwick, p.118.
   "On March 20... it was learned that the struggle at Fisher Bendix had ended in complete victory . . .The lesson was not lost on the Manchester engineers". Chadwick, op.cit, p.115.
3. Department of Employment Gazette, May 1973, pp.526-7. (Vehicles and Electrical Engineering were exceptions).
4. For £6 week pay rise; a 35 hour week; 1 week extra holiday; & equal pay.
5. 'The Morning Star', 14th.Mar.'72
6. Ibid.
7. Teulings, op cit., p.4.

In fact, it was the mass suspension of workers at the James Mills factory in Bredbury that led to the first occupation[1]. A large number of other occupations soon followed; some directly from the workforce initiative, some as responses to lock-out threats and some in solidarity with workers at other sites of the same company[2]. In one case - Sharston Engineering - an attempt to use legal eviction was responded to by a mass picket which involved a large number of engineers who were themselves on strike or engaged in an occupation[3]. Before too long similar actions concerning the same national claim had spread to Newcastle, Leeds, Sheffield, Bucks, and London. And, before these occupations had come to a conclusion, at least three other occupations occurred which were not connected with that dispute[4].

In short, the Manchester occupations did involved politicized workers; they did involve solidarity actions; and they did encourage imitators. Teulings' concentration on a simple logic, extracted from the wider context of the time, allows him, erroneously, to view the Manchester sit-ins as less fundamentally challenging than redundancy occupations. The actual situation was such that Chadwick, rightly, could talk of "an Olympian leap in consciousness" ; Jim Arnison of the 'Morning Star' could describe it as,

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1. In this case they were led by NUGMW workers. This reminds us that several CONFED unions were involved in the battle - thus making unneccessary Teulings' comment about a lack of other union solidarity.
2. An answer to Teulings' charge about a lack of solidarity between occupation workforces. See chapter 6.
3. Another answer to Teulings - see footnote 2.
4. An answer to Teulings' claim that the Manchester actions did not inspire wider support and imitators.
5. p.113.

"something quite fundamental . . . especially to those who look beyond the immediate struggle towards the creation of a different kind of society"[1]; and Ken Coates could refer to it as "a radical challenge to the divine right of property-ownership"[2].

A question of style: Unlike Chadwick's the characterisation by Coates applies to all types of occupation. I have argued elsewhere[3] against Chadwick (and Keyser and Hemingway) that "occupations are, by their very nature, radical forms of industrial action". The extent to which the inherent challenge will be explicit will depend on the existance and commitment of those involved to a radical understanding of the action and/or a context of widespread social unrest[4].

Taken as a whole the massive wave of workplace occupations - both redundancy, pay and other origins - contributed to a political climate in which the Government felt impelled to introduce legislation designed to alter industrial decision-making structures to allow a measure of "worker participation"[5].

If we choose to focus upon the origin (or aim) of each occupation - as Chadwick and Keyser and Hemingway do - then we divorce the actions from their wider context in the same way that Teulings was guilty of doing. Indeed, by so focusing we are effectively able to show that Chadwick and Keyser/Hemingway's categories are weak and misleading:

"In practice (the Keyser/Hemingway) classification would lead us to label such cases as the occupation at British Leyland's Basingstoke plant . . . as defensive because they sought to prevent the factory being sold to the

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1. The 'Morning Star', 14th April. '72.
2. Coates, 1973, p.42.
3. Mills, 1976b. See Chapter 1, pp.22-23.
4. See points (ii) & (iii) Chapter 2 - 'Marxian Industrial Relations Theory and Workplace Occupations'.
5. I am refering here to the 'Bullock Report' recommendations.

Eaton Corporation with a consequent loss of jobs, while we would label the Briant Colour Printing works occupation . . . as assertive because they had the aim of remaining open but, necessarily, under new ownership. Both were militantly fought, with the British Leyland occupation involving 1200 workers and lasting over 10 weeks, and Briants involving only 150 workers but lasting over a year. In the first case the workers sought to challenge the company's right to exercise its 'right' to decide the particular future of the Basingstoke plant and thus to decide a general investment policy. In the latter case, the workers found themselves faced with closure and simply hung on to the plant and machinery until a new owner was eventually found: in the course of their occupation they specifically discussed the prospect of establishing a workers' co-operative and decisively rejected the idea" (1).

Similar contrasting examples can be found between occupations which were eventually transformed into worker co-operatives and those which aimed to force the existing owners to keep the plant in business:

". . . the Strachan Engineering occupation . . . would find itself labelled 'defensive' while the occupation at the Scottish Daily Express . . . would need to be labelled 'assertive'. The Strachan workers were fighting to force the company to stay open while the Express workers campaigned for the establishment of a workers' co-operative which they finally achieved but only to the extent that they were boosted by a large sum of private capital and with entrepreneur Robert Maxwell virtually playing the role of managing director," (2).

The general comment still holds true that,

"In none of these cases (and there are plenty more contrasts) is there a straightforward case for distinguishing some as assertive and some as not"(3).

Teulings, in his own way, reveals the questionable nature of claiming that redndancy occupations are less 'assertive' or "offensive" than other types. And by focussing upon the origin of the dispute a reverse case to that made by Chadwick can be argued. Contrast, for example, the onset of the UCS work-in with the occupation of the James Mills steelworks in Bredbury:

"This is the first campaign of its kind in trade unionism. We are not going on strike. We are not even having a sit-in. . . we are taking over the yards because we refuse to accept that faceless men can take these decisions"(4).

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1. A.J.Mills, 1976b, p.47.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Speech by Jimmy Reid which began the work-in. Reproduced in K.Coates, 1980, p.22.

"... we are going to fight - not only the shipyard workers but all the workers are going to fight . . ."(1).

"They will need to get the soldiers from the Bogside to get us out of the Clydeside" (2).

"UCS is part of our contemporary history, its story written by workers and their deeds. It is more than that - it is a portent of things to come. Workers will determine the future and in the process will write the most glorious pages in the history of our country, "(3).

The begining of the Manchester occupations was less dramatic and less fiery. It is true that at the mass meeting of stewards on 13th March occupations were suggested as an answer to management lock-out threats but the first action to occur was much more matter of fact - of course the UCS and other actions had taken the publicity edge off of occupations. As Chadwick records it,

"Following the District stewards' meeting on the 13th the Bredbury workers voted to begin sanctions on the 15th. The following day the management suspended the entire workforce who decided that the only effective counter was an immediate and swift occupation" (4).

This action was to set a pattern in the Region:

"The story of the Bredbury sit-in is typical of most of the sit-ins which were to follow in the area" (5).

In terms of the challenging effect to the concept of control the Manchester sit-ins were no less (and no more so) than the UCS and other redundancy occupations. The way the actions occurred was also very similar: in both types of action the workers more often than not responded to management action - in redundancy cases occupation was a response to a closure or redundancy threat and in the Manchester cases occupation was often a response to a lock-out or suspension threat.

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1. Jimmy Reid making an early comment on the work-in struggle. Quoted in Thompson & Hart, '72, p.49.
2. Willie McInnes, leading UCS steward. Quoted in Thompson & Hart, p.49.
3. Jimmy Reid. Introduction to Thompson & Hart.
4. Chadwick, op cit.,115
5. Ibid.

From the UCS onwards occupations were embarked upon, on the whole, by militant workers led by a politically left shopfloor leadership and/or having been involved in political strikes (see Table 2.2 below). Their engagement in workplace occupations both arose in, and contributed to, a general climate which climaxed in the defeat of a Government and the election of a new Labour Government.[1]

Table 2.2

The political involvement/leadership of occupation workforces.

| | Cases involving a left political leadership &/or strikes. | Cases not involving either. | Cases where info. not available. | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1971: | 3 (75%/60%)* | 1 (25%/20%)* | 1 (20%) | 1971 |
| 72: | 74 (96%/72%) | 3 ( 4%/ 3%) | 26 (25%) | 72 |
| 73: | 12 (100%/48%) | 0 | 13 (52%) | 73 |
| 74: | 9 (100%/41%) | 0 | 13 (59%) | 74 |
| 75: | 15 (94%/35%) | 1 ( 6%/ 2%)* | 27 (63%) | 75 |
| tal: | 113 (96%/57) | 5 ( 4%/ 3%) | 80 (40%) | Total. |

* The percentages refer to each year total separately. The total for all years combined is given at the end. The first, underlined, percentage figure refers to all cases where information was available. The second figure refers to the percentage of all occupation cases regardless of information availability.

Occupations: truth and logic: While it may be true that occupations occurred within a general context of radical militancy it might be asked that 'is there not a case for arguing that logically one might expect different forms of occupation to have a different potential impact upon consciousness?'. We can look at this from two situations - i) within the 'radical' era, and ii) outside of this era.

The contrast between pay occupations and redundancy occupations has already been discussed in the previous section in regard to those actions in the first year following the UCS work-in. Table 2.3 provides a breakdown

1. See Chapter 5.

of occupations by origin for the entire period 1971-75.

Table 2.3

The origins of occupations.

| | Redundancy/closure. | Pay. | Other reasons. | Information not available. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1971: | 5 (100%) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 72: | 22 ( 22%/21%)* | 71 (70%/69%) | 8 ( 8%/8%) | 2 (2%) |
| 73: | 10 (40%) | 9 (36%) | 6 (24%) | 0 |
| 74: | 12 (55%) | 8 (36%) | 2 ( 9%) | 0 |
| 75: | 24 (67%/56%) | 4 (11%/ 9%) | 8 (22%/19%) | 7 (16%) |
| Total: | 73 (39%/37%) | 92 (49%/46%) | 24 (13%/12%)** | 9 ( 5%) |

* The percentages refer to each year total separately. The combined total appears at the end. The first, underlined, percentage figure refers to all cases where information was available and the second figure refers to all cases regardless of information availability.

** All percentage figures are rounded upwards so in this case a total of 101% is the result.

The table reveals the slightly surprising result that in fact the majority of occupations originated with pay disputes rather than redundancy/closure. Even if we were to exclude the Manchester engineering sit-ins[1] redundancy occupations would make up just under 55% of the total of known cases.

There is no real evidence to suggest that on balance redundancy occupations differed in regard to action and consciousness from the other types of occupation. All three types involved examples of militantly fought battles; links with other occupation workforces; involvement in political strikes[2]; the existance of a politically left leadership[3]; and changes in worker consciousness[4].

1. Although I can think of no good reason for doing so.
2. There is some indication that pay disputes have a greater link with political strikes but this is problematic due to a lack of information in this regard. For instance, 64 pay disputes of 92 (70%) have an association with political strikes as opposed to 20 redundancy disputes (27% of all such cases) and 5 other reason disputes (21%). However, respectively these figures are 98%, 71% and 100% of those cases where full information is available.
3. The same problem is true as for point 2. The figures are pay - 17 cases (18% of total or 100% known cases); redundancy - 31 cases (42%/86%); other - 12 cases (50%/100%).
4. I would argue that occupations in themselves signify a change in consciousness - see chapters 1 and 2.

Due to the different nature of the various occupations there were differences in style and constraint. Such differences, under certain circumstances, might provide differences in potential for changes in consciousness. But this should be treated with some caution. Such potential may differ with differences in context. Teulings, as discussed above, has pointed out the greater potential of redundancy occupations over other types of occupation: regrettably he mistook potentiality for reality. Chadwick, unintentially, has pointed out how, in different circumstances, pay occupations can appear the more potentially radical.

In a pay dispute situation there is more of an imbalance between action and end than in that of a redundancy situation. In the first case the worker may feel that an occupation is too dramatic an action considering the possible gain of a few pounds a week extra wages. In the second case, however, the worker may feel that he/she has nothing to lose and everything to gain by staging an occupation. As Teulings has pointed out, the redundancy/closure occupation contains a strong moral element which the pay dispute lacks. There would appear to be a much better potential for pointing out the 'evils of capitalism' to workers losing their job than in explaining the labour theory of value to those involved in a pay claim!

Once an occupation is underway there is a greater potential in a redundancy situation for linking the struggle to an understanding of the broader political economy. Thus, for example, in most of the redundancy cases both nationalization and transformation into a workers' co-operative was considered[1].

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1. Such cases includes the following: Fisher-Bendix workers after two occupations became a workers' co-operative; Hawker-Siddeley workers (Oct.'74) called for nationalisation of the industry; Imperial Typewriters called for nationalisation/attempted to become a workers' co-operative; Leadgate became a workers' co-operative; NVT Wolverhampton called for nationalisation/considered becoming a workers' co-operative; Propytex attempted to become a workers' co-operative; Todd's attempted to become a workers' co-operative; Triumph Meriden became a workers' co-operative.

Due to the nature of the demand the redundancy occupation has tended to be of greater duration than any other type (see Table 2.31). This means that there is greater time in which the workforce may be politicised and may influence the thinking of other workers beyond the dispute.

Table 2.31

The duration of occupations by type.

| Duration. | Redundancy Occ. | Pay Occ. | Other Occ. | Total* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Under 1 week. | 4 | 4 | 6 | 14 |
| 1 to 2 weeks | 6 | 8 | 1 | 15 |
| 2 to 3 weeks | 2 | 6 | 0 | 8 |
| 3 to 4 weeks | 1 | 7 | 0 | 8 |
| 1 to 3 months | 15 | 25 | 0 | 40 |
| 3 to 6 months | 10 | 2 | 0 | 12 |
| 6 to 12 months | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| over 1 year. | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Total* | 43 | 52 | 7 = | 102 |
| Mean Average (approx) | 4 months | 2 months | 3 days | |
| Median | 2 months | 1 month | 3 days | |
| SD | 16.0weeks | 5.9weeks | 1.8days | |

* That is the total of all known cases. In the remaining cases either the type or the duration is not known.

If we look at the numbers involved according to different types of occupation (Table 2.32) we can see that redundancy types involved, on average, more workers than pay occupations and considerably more than 'other' occupations. Taking into consideration the range of numbers involved the key difference is between redundancy and pay occupations and that of 'other' occupations. This seems to be explained by two main reasons. Primarily, if we look at the actual origins of the individual occupations in the non-pay/non-redundancy category (Table 2.33) we can see that they are relatively less focusses for mass involvement. The great majority of the redundancy occupations involved either closure or a large number of redundancies: this in itself

meant that the great majority, if not all, of each workforce were heavily involved. This is relatively less the case in regard to pay disputes: in large companies different groups of workers might be involved in separate negotiations. As it happens the nature of the national engineering claim of 1971-72 was such that it bound many hundreds of thousands of workers together - across workplaces; across companies; and across industries. Those occupations associated with this claim made up sixty-four percent of all pay occupations and if we were to exclude them[1] then pay occupations would have only occurred half as often as redundancy actions. Relatively less so again are disputes concerning safety conditions; the use of non-union labour; blacklisting; procedural agreements; victimisation; and trade union recognition. These are more likely to involve sections of workers and as such this reduces both the likelihood and potential effectiveness of an occupation. An occupation is more likely to occur where a relatively small workforce is involved or where such problems affect the greater part of a large workforce. In fact, these occupations were largely either partial or involving a relatively small workforce (see Table 2.34).

Table 2.32.

Number of workers involved by type of occupation.

| Redundancy Occ.s | Pay Occupations. | Other Occupations. |
|---|---|---|
| 44,480 (Total no.all cases) | 54,120 (Total no.all cases) | 6,894 (Total no.all cases) |
| No. of cases: 69 | 89 | 20 |
| Mean Average: 645 | 608 | 345 |
| Range: 12 - 8,500 | 22 - 5,500 | 1 - 2,000 |

(n = 178)

1. In this case, given the particular argument, it is right to exclude them.

Table 2.33

The origins of non-pay/redundancy occupations.

(i) Trade union organisation* - 11 cases.

C.A.Parsons (defence of trade union organisation)
C.Bryant (Birmingham; Ringway Priory site. Against blacklisting)
C.Bryant (Birmingham; Woodgate Valley site. Defence of trade union organisation)
Catterpillar (Against the employment of non-union labour)
Cubitt's (Against victimisation).
Lucas (Wolverhampton. Against the employment of non-union labour)
McAlpine (Against the use of 'lump' labour)
Taylor-Woodrow (Against the employment of non-union labour)
Lovell (Against the use of 'lump' labour)
Seiko (For trade union recognition)
Scott's Bakery (Against the employment of 'blackleg' labour)

(ii) Use of management disciplinary powers** - 9 cases.

BAC (Weybridge. Trade unionists suspended during a dispute).
Educational Audio Visual Inc. (Workforce sacked during negotiations over pay)
British Rail (SWindon. Trade unionists sacked for 'blacking' work)
Gravesend and Dartford Reporter. (Workers sacked during national dispute).
Ford (Swansea. Against management use of disciplinary powers)
Stretford Council (Sacking of shop stewards during a dispute).
Cammell Laird ("mismanagement" of the shipyards)
Shell (Ellesmere Port. Worker disciplined.)
BLMC Light Vans (Use of "disciplinary" powers).

(iii) Conditions of Employment*** - 4 cases

AUEW staff (Procedural agreement)
Gerrard (Demand for alteration of holiday date)
Hawker-Siddeley (Manning procedures)
Henry Boot (Safety conditions)

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* The defence, maintenance or advancement of trade union organisation.

* Although workers were sacked in several cases this was more due to employer action concerning negotiations rather than any broader attack on trade unionism.

**The defence, maintenance or advancement of working conditions.

Table 2.34

The Extent To Which Type of Occupation Was Full Or Partial+

| | Redundancy. | | Pay Occ. | | Other Occ. | | Total Occ. | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | F | P | F | P | F | P | F | P |
| 1971: | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| 72: | 17 | 3 | 52 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 71 | 12 |
| 73: | 7 | 3 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 15 | 10 |
| 74: | 10 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 15 | 7 |
| 75: | 19 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 26 | 8 |
| Total | 58 | 12 | 65 | 11 | 9 | 14 | 132 | 37 |

+ See key to Table 1. The figures are for all cases on which information was available.

The other important factor explaining the relatively small numbers involved in 'other' occupations is the fact that a large minority were in the Construction industry: of 24 occupations in this category 7 (29%) were in the Construction industry, and this represents 54% of all occupations in that industry[1]. It is not, for fairly obvious reasons, an industry which is attractive for occupations; involving open air sites, incomplete structures, and often little or no lighting and heating. Indeed the great majority were partial; the occupiers taking over site offices or construction machinery. Partial occupations in the Construction industry account for 26% of all such occupations, and of these 78% originated from 'other' causes. Construction industry occupations involved only 314 (5%) of the total number of workers involved in 'other' occupations.

The fact that occupations occurred in this industry appears to be due to the activities of the CPGB-fronted 'Building

1. Of 13 occupations in the Construction industry 7 originated from 'other' causes, 2 from redundancy and 2 from pay causes.

Workers' Charter Group'. This group was influential in pushing for a national strike on pay and against 'lump labour' in 1972. Following the strike the Group were to the fore in resisting recriminations against militants and in the continued campaign against the 'lump'.

In early 1972 Group members were active on key sites of leading companies. In the wake of the UCS work-in and the Manchester occupations Group members spread the tactic to Birmingham when they occupied two Bryant's sites over a pay claim. This was quickly followed by the occupation of another of Bryant's Birmingham sites - this time against management "blacklisting" policy. A fourth site was occupied later that month with the demand that "blackleg" labour be sacked[1]. At the end of the year a call wad made for the occupation of several Bryant sites in the area if union militants were not reinstated.

In February 1973 two London sites (Cubbitt and McAlpine) were occupied in reply to the use of victimisation and lump labour. In May the Taylor-Woodrow had one of its London sites occupied in protest at the use of non-union labour. In all these cases the Charter Group was influential and were likely also involved in the Cammell Laird redundancy occupation (Feb.'75) and the Henry Boot safety conditions occupation later that year. Thus, the Group were involved in at least 9 of 13 Construction industry occupations.

Occupations and full or partial consciousness: By and large there are a good many similarities between full and partial

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1. That same month Lovell had one of its sites in London occupied against the use of 'lump' labour.

occupations in regard to consciousness and action[1]. There were some important differences however; primarily some of the partial occupations only had a bare handful of workers directly involved[2]. So we might expect that partial occupations will have less potential impact than full occupations, but we have to be careful about overgeneralisation; some partial occupations involved hundreds of workers; one or two lasted a matter of months, and many had links with political strikes and left leadership. Nonetheless, the full occupation has logically a greater potential for impressing those involved that they are "in control"; a partial occupation is contrained in that direction.

If time is an important factor in the development of consciousness then the partial occupation is again relatively the weaker. As Table 2.4 indicates partial occupations last considerably shorter than full occupations.

Table 2.4

A Comparison of the Duration of Full and Partial Occupations.

| Duration | Full Occ. | Partial Occ. | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Under 1 week | 10 | 5 | 15 |
| 1 to 2 weeks | 11 | 4 | 15 |
| 2 to 3 weeks | 7 | 1 | 8 |
| 3 to 4 weeks | 7 | 1 | 8 |
| 1 to 3 months | 30 | 2 | 32 |
| 3 to 6 months | 11 | 1 | 12 |
| 6 to 12 months | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Over 1 year | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| Total+ | 88 | 14 | 102 |
| Mean | (11 weeks) | (26 days) | |
| SD | (13 weeks) | (51 days) | |

+Total for all cases on which information was available.

1. Due likely to the radical context generally. At least 17 partial occupations had political strikes/leadership links.
2. 4 cases involved 3 or less workers.

Partial occupations have also involved less workers.

Table 2.41

A Comparison of no. of Workers Involved in Full and Partial Occ's.

| | Full | Partial |
|---|---|---|
| Number of occupations: | 133 | 31 |
| Total no. of workers : | 96,118 | 8,900 |
| Mean average : | 723 | 603 |
| SD : | 1,156 | 287 |

Looking at some of the partial occupations, however, it would be difficult to generalise. Roughly it is possible to divide them into 3 sub-divisions, i) those involving the occupation of a token element of a workplace, ii) those involving the occupation of a section of a workplace and, iii) those which involved occupation of a strategic or self-contained element of a workplace.

An example of the first case would be construction industry occupations where a handful of workers occupied machinery. These involved very few workers and only rarely raised any issue of 'workers' control'. About 15% of partial occupations were in this category. An example of the second case is the occupation at Gerrard where a section of the shopfloor was taken over while other sections continued to work. This type also constrains the potential upon notions of 'workers' control' in so far as the actual control being exercised is, in reality, partial[1]. This type involved about 45% of partial occupations.

1. Nonetheless, at least 40% of these workerforces had involved themselves in political strikes and 40% had association with left leadership - 47% having one or other association.

An example of the third type would be the occupation at Strathclyde University where operators occupied their computer building. The self-contained nature of this kind of occupation provided a greater potential for raising ideas of 'control'when compared with the other two types of action. This type accounted for the remaining 40% of partial occupations.

Occupations and Gender.

Due to the nature of the information it is difficult to gauge the extent to which their were differences in the involvement of men and women in workplace occupations. What information there is indicates that there were fewer women involved than men; at the very maximum 35% of all occupation workers were female[1]. This is a relatively lower female involvement compared to males if we consider that between 38.5 and 40% of those employed in the "production industries" between 1971 and '75 were females.

Comparing those occupations that were wholly or overwhelmingly male with those female we find that the latter were of much shorter duration, involved fewer workers and lacked political associations and experiences[2].

In terms of type of occupation - full or partial - there appears to be no great difference between male and female involvement. There were differences in the number of occupations that were either wholly/overwhelmingly male or female; with 39 of the former as opposed to 10 of the latter.

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1. Wholly/Overwhelmingly male occupations involved 20,718 workers, female types 1,267 and 'mixed' types 42,210. Adding half the latter total with that for female types we get a percentage of 35.

2. Caution is urged here due to the very small number of cases involved. Information was only available on the duration of 6, and the political associations of 2 female occupations.

In terms of the involvement of men and women in occupations as a whole women were involved in 55% and men in 83%.

'Mixed' occupations occurred almost as often as male types but they involved a far greater total number of workers, were of slightly greater duration and were overwhelmingly full occupations. They involved relatively fewer political associations and experiences than male occupations. (Table 2.5).

Table 2.5

A Comparison of 'Male', 'Female' and 'Mixed' Occupations.

| | | Male | Female | Mixed |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| a) | Numbers Involved | | | |
| | No. of occupations: | 39 | 10 | 38 |
| | Total no. of workers*: | 20,218 | 1,267 | 43,250 |
| | Mean average*: | 561 | 140 | 1,169 |
| | SD* | 1,628 | 158 | 1,321 |
| b) | Duration | | | |
| | Up to 1 month: | 9 | 3 | 11 |
| | 1 to 3 months: | 10 | 2 | 10 |
| | Over 3 months: | 4 | 1 | 9 |
| | Total number of cases: | 23 | 6 | 30 |
| | Mean average (approx): | 14 weeks | 9 weeks | 15 weeks |
| | SD: | 18 weeks | 7 weeks | 16 weeks |
| c) | Full or Partial Occ's. | | | |
| | Full: | 17 | 4 | 37 |
| | Partial: | 16 | 5 | 1 |
| | Total: | 33 | 9 | 38 |

*Of those cases were information is available. For instance, information for only 9 of the 10 female cases was available - hence the apparently incorrect mean average.

Table 2.5 cont...

| d) Political associations/experience. | Male | Female | Mixed |
|---|---|---|---|
| Workforce involved in political strikes: | 17 | 0* | 15 |
| Occupations involving political leadership: | 20 | 2 | 16 |
| Occupations involving either of the above: | 26 | 2 | 23 |
| Occupations involving neither of the above: | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Total number of cases where information was available: | 28 | 2 | 25 |

* This may signify lack of information rather than lack of involvement.

Looking at the industrial distribution we find, not surprisingly, that 'male' occupations were in those industries noted for the overwhelming employment of male labour;a third were in the Construction industry and another third in the Metal Manufacture and the Shipbuilding industries.

'Female' worker occupations were largely in the Electrical Engineering industry and included the only two occupations in the Clothing & Footwear industry and the only one in the Leather industry.

'Mixed' occupations were also largely in the Electrical Engineering industry. They provided the only two occupations in the Instrument Engineering industry and two of the three Textile industry occupations.

We can say that women were less involved in worker occupations than men and provided the leadership in even fewer cases. Generalities apart, where woman have been involved they

have equalled various of the examples of male involvement[1]; they have fought for pay (SEI); resisted redundancies (Ransome, Hoffman & Pollard), and they have occupied over conditions of employment. They have inspired and assisted other occupations (Gerrard/Sexton). They have produced campaigning material and have provided solidarity to other struggles (Gerrard/Plessey, Swindon). They have staged or have been involved in work-ins (Sextons/BCP) and they have been involved in, have initiated and have campaigned for the establishment of workers' co-operatives (Fisher Bendix/Triumph Meriden/SDN/Sextons/Imperial Typewriters).

The Industrial Concentration of Occupations.

As Table 2.6 shows occupations have been concentrated in the manufacturing industries. During the period 1970-75 the top four industries in regard to number of industrial stoppages were Mining & Quarrying, Mechanical Engineering, Metal Manufacture, and Shipbuilding & Marine.[2] The latter three experienced a large number of occupations - accounting for 32% of the total. Mining & Quarrying did not experience any occupations. This is likely for two reasons, i)the nature of the industry which puts technical and physical constraints upon occupation and, ii) the new found unity of the NUM which led to industry-wide struggle which achieved the workers' aims more effectively than any individual occupation would have done.

The next two industries with the highest rate of "stoppages" were Electrical Engineering and Vehicles. Both

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1. See A.Mills, 1976a, pp.51-54.

2. My assessment is taken from the DoE Gazette for the 6 year period. It is based upon number of "stoppages" per 100,000 employees.

figure highly in the occupations table and collectively account for 37% of the total - with the other top three they account for 69% of all occupations[1].

Six other industries to appear in the top ten[2] industries for industrial "stoppages" were Metal Goods and Construction - both of which experienced a number of occupations; Other Manufacturing - which experienced some occupations; Transport & Communication and Coal & Petroleum products - both of which only experienced one occupation; and Bricks,pottery etc - which did not experience any occupations.

A possible answer to the lack of occupations in the Transport & Communications industry is that the nature of the industry is relatively prohibiting to such actions. The situation in Coal & Petroleum may have something to do with the size of the industry; with only 40,000 employees it took only 10 stoppages to put it in the top ten. The Brick industry is less explicable - although a small industry it did register a substantial number of stoppages in any given year over the six year period. There is clearly a case for further research into this question.

The other main anomaly is that of the Printing industry which recorded one of the lowest industrial stoppages records and yet experienced a relatively high number of occupations. This is possibly due to the fact that it is a relatively large industry and needs a sizeable number of "stoppages" to move out

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1. I have added Instrument Engineering to Electrical Engineering because the DoE Gazette sometimes counted them together under the broader category of "Engineering". Cf. DoE Gazette, Vol. 85, Jan.'77, p.6.

2. Over the 6 year period more than 10 industries appeared in the top ten in a given year.

of the bottom group[1]. In 1972 - its highest year for "stoppages", it was ranked 11th - the industry experienced a third of its total number of occupations.

Table 2.6

The Industrial Concentration of Occapations.

| Industry | No. of Occ's per year '71 | '72 | '73 | '74 | '75 | Total of cases per industry. | % of all Occ's. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| M.Eng'rng. | 1 | 23 | 6 | 1 | 5 | 36 | 20% |
| E.Eng'rng. | 0 | 17 | 2 | 5 | 8 | 32 | 18% |
| Vehicles. | 0 | 10 | 8 | 5 | 9 | 32 | 18% |
| Metal Manu'. | 1 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 13 | 7% |
| Construction. | 0 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 13 | 7% |
| Printing | 1 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 9 | 5% |
| Metal Goods. | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 8 | 4.5% |
| Ship & Marine | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 7 | 4% |
| Other Manuf' | 0 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 2% |
| Food, D & Tob. | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2% |
| Chemical | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2% |
| Textiles | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2% |
| Misc. Serv. | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2% |
| I.Eng'rng. | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1% |
| Clothing & F. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1% |
| Public Admin. | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1% |
| Coal & Petrol | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | |
| Leather | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | |
| Timber & Furn | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3% |
| Trans & Comm. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | |
| Prof. & Sci. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | |

The industrial concentration of occupations and industrial stoppages lend credance to the analysis made in chapter two

1. As it was it didn't fall below 25 "stoppages" in any year.

concerning different potential in revolutionary consciousness. The great majority of occupations occurred in the surplus value producing industries - 96%. Less than one percent of occupations occurred in Transport and Communications. Public administration, Insurance, Banking, and Professional and Scientific services saw only 2 occupations in total. Miscellaneous services experienced only 2% of all occuoations and Agriculture and Distribution experienced none. The great majority - 94% - of occupations occurred in private industry; publically owned industry and local government experienced very few occupations.

If we look at the political associations/experience by industry it pretty much mirrors the ranking by occupation of Table 2.6 and the distribution by union discussed in chapter 9.

Table 2.61

The Political Associations/Experience of Occ's by Industry.

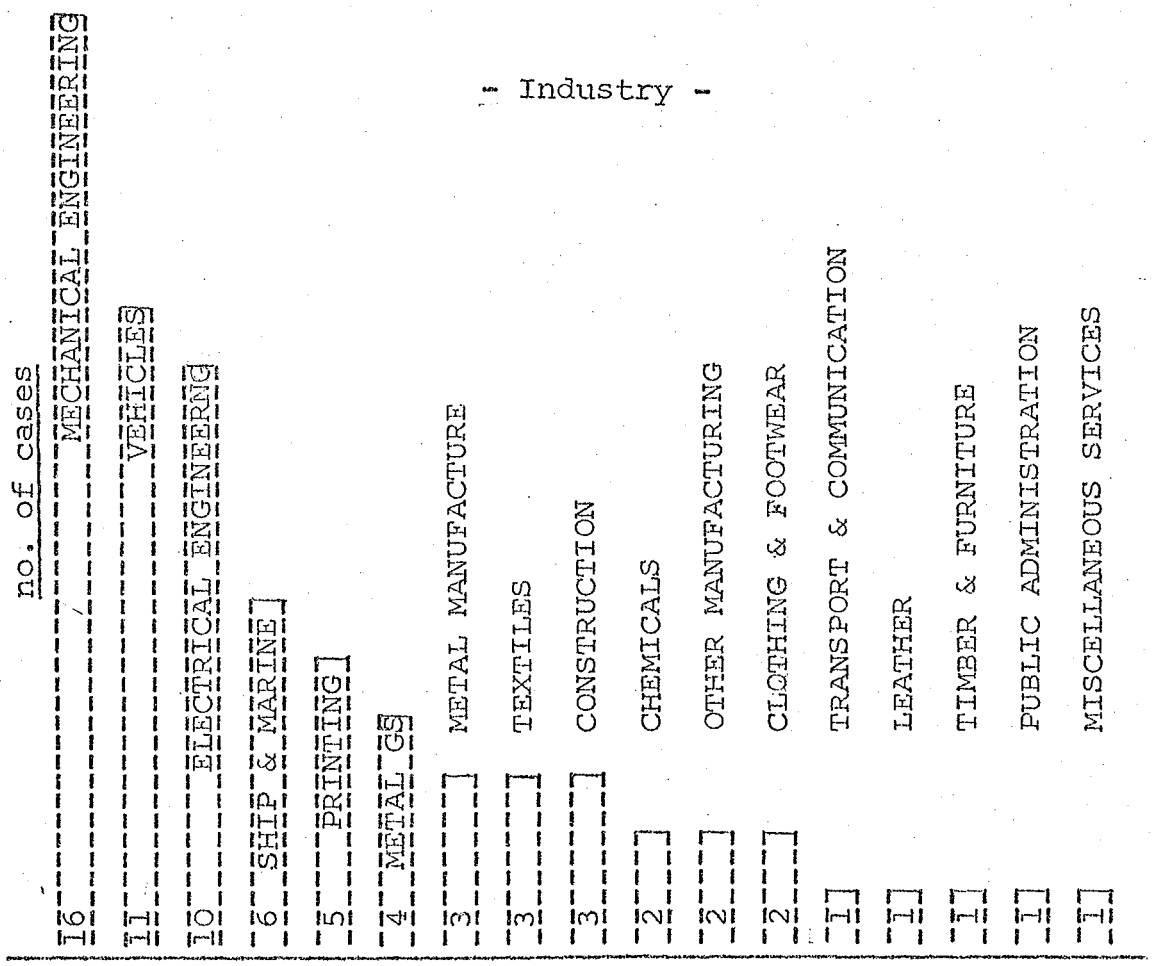
| - Occupations associated with - | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strikes | | Political Leadership | | Both | |
| Electrical Eng. | 16 | Vehicles | 17 | Vehicles | 19 |
| Vehicles | 15 | Con'strn. | 9 | El.Eng. | 18 |
| Mech. Engineer. | 13 | Mech. Eng. | 8 | Mech. Eng. | 15 |
| Metal Manuf' | 10 | El. Eng. | 6 | Metal Man. | 12 |
| Metal Goods | 5 | Metal Manu. | 4 | Con'strn. | 9 |
| Ship & Marine | 3 | Ship & Mar. | 4 | Metal Gds. | 6 |
| Construction | 2 | Printing | 3 | Ship & Mar. | 4 |
| Printing | 2 | Other Manu. | 1 | Other Manu. | 3 |
| Other Manufact. | 2 | Chemicals | 1 | Chemicals | 2 |
| Coal & Petrol | 1 | Leather | 1 | Leather | 1 |
| Chemicals | 1 | Textiles | 1 | Food, D & T | 1 |
| | | Coal & Pet. | 1 | Coal & Pet. | 1 |
| | | Clothing | 1 | Clothing | 1 |
| Total no. of cases : 70 | | 57 | | 92 | |

Extreme caution needs to be exercised here but there does seem to be an association between the likelihood of an occupation occurring and political association/experience.

There are considerable differences in the distribution of redundancy occupations across industry.

Table 2.62

The Distribution of Redundancy Occupations across Industry.




The reasons for the uneven nature of the distribution is possibly due to the relative existance of political associations/experience and the relative unemployment levels between industries. A variety of combinations makes any generalisation difficult though.

Political associations/experience are strongest in the Engineering industries and this might help explain the high number of occupations in response to redundancy in the Vehicle, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering industries: of the latter two 38% occurred in the North West region which is noted for its high levels of unemployment and its widespread militancy during this period. The Vehicle industry was in deep recession and was noted for its militancy.

Although there was an extremely high level of unemployment in the Construction and Shipbuilding & Marine industries during this period both are difficult to occupy and both involve a work process which makes occupation relatively superfluous. Shipbuilders would need to anticipate redundancy months in advance and take action at the same time. The action, like that of the UCS workers, would likely have to involve a campaign for government assistance - requiring a high level of political leadership and organisation. Construction workers would be left with a completed site requiring no further work and are more likely to become unemployed after, rather than before, the completion of a contract. Nonetheless, both groups of workers did have a relatively high number of occupations and this might be accounted for by the relatively high number of political associations/ experience.

The period also saw a recession in the Textile and Printing industries and this was reflected in the number of occupations. Indeed, the majority of redundancy occupations

occurred in those areas with above average levels of unemployment. The major anomaly is the relatively high number of redundancy occupations in the less unemployment South East region. However, almost half of these occurred in the Vehicle industry (46%) and over 60% in the Vehicle and Printing industries combined: the majority of these occurring when the region's unemployment was over 2% and often close to 4%. Regardless, the first half of the 1970's was marked by high and rising unemployment and all the regions were affected to different degrees.

Occupations and Regional Variations.

The North West region experienced many more occupations than any other region. This region was undergoing a fairly rapid period of stagnation and rising unemployment: 18% of the region's occupations concerned redundancy and the militant engineering actions accounted for a further 60%.

The Scottish workers, who started off the occupation movement, had the second best ratio. This has long had a reputation as a militant region and nearly 26% of the occupations concerned redundancy - at a time when the region had the highest unemployment rate in Great Britain.

The West Midlands is perhaps the biggest surprise in that it had one of the lowest ratios of occupations and yet it became famous for the "Battle of Saltley Gates" during the Miner's strike of 1972. Not surprisingly 60% of the region's occupations were in engineering - particularly in the vehicles industry which dominates the region.

Throughout the period recession began to bite at jobs and living standards generally. All workers were more or less affected across industry and region. To that extent it would be too rigid to make a great deal out of variations in either region or industry. At best they are indications of possible differences.

Table 2.7

The Regional Variation of Occupations.

| Region. | No. of cases - '71 | '72 | '73 | '74 | '75 | Total | No.of occ's per 1000 employees |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| North West | - | 64 | 7 | 5 | 8 | 87 | 1.64 |
| South East | - | 11 | 9 | 4 | 11 | 35 | 0.16 |
| Scotland | 3 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 13 | 0.77 |
| North | - | 4 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 12 | 0.41 |
| South West | - | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 10 | 0.47 |
| Yorks & Humb. | 2 | 5 | - | - | 3 | 10 | 0.45 |
| West Midlands | - | 3 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 10 | 0.37 |
| Wales | - | 2 | 2 | - | 3 | 7 | 0.31 |
| East Anglia | - | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 0.17 |
| East Midlands | - | 3 | 1 | 1 | - | 5 | 0.51 |

* I have excluded nationwide cases and the 1 case in N.Ireland.

The Work-in.

One form of occupation which has gained more than its fair share of attention in the media has been the "work-in". At least 13 occupations claimed that they were of this type. But, as I have written elsewhere, very few of these live up to that claim:

"A look at the . . . occupations that called themselves work-ins show that in most cases they weren't entirely what is understood by a work-in. At the River Don Steel Works . . . the redundant . . . workers were employed on campaign work. They were paid 'hardship money' . . . At IPD the electricity company had the cables dug up to cut off the supply. Thus, with just the use of an emergency generator there was only enough supply for work in a

small part of the factory. In the fruit juice section they ran out of sugar, so, as with most other sections, they were reduced to maintenance and cleaning work.

At Propytex, as with the UCS, productive work was able to continue by completing orders for the receiver: a large export order was in hand when the closure was announced. A deal was also arranged with the receiver to do some work for local business concerns. Nonetheless, although this kept the workers in work, most of their money came from donations, etc.

Briants and Sextons were probably the only two fully fledged work-ins. In both cases they actually took on a substantial amount of new work. At Sextons . . . they produced leather work which they sold on stalls at first. Briants was in many ways a natural for a work-in. At a period of intense industrial and social conflict a great number of trade unionists were in need of printed material, and this is where Briants got much of their work. They also got one or two commercial orders and completed some orders in hand", (1).

They mainly gained attention due to the efforts of the UCS - which was the first of the occupations; Sextons and IPD - which gained noteriety when they were transformed into workers' co-operatives; and Briants - where the talent of the workforce gained it maximum publicity well beyond its size and significance.

The decision to stage a "work-in" does not seem to evidence any greater level of consciousness over other forms of occupation. This is likely due to the nature of the work-ins - many of which did not justify the name and all of which operated more or less within the law, e.g., neither UCS or Briants workers seized the premises on any permanent basis even though the action was meant, in each case, to form part of an assault on capitalism[2].

Work-ins did have some strategic advantage even though they did not prove any more or less successful than sit-ins:

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1. A.J.Mills, 1976a, p.57.

2. Of course the decision to work-in or not also depended heavily upon technical constraints such as the nature of the working situation, processing, productions, marketing, etc.

"The work-in has some advantages over the sit-in . . . From a propaganda point of view it is very difficult to attack workers for 'working' and from the view of maintaining morale a work-in has the effect of keeping the workforce occupied", (1).

"Workers who staged work-ins . . . fared no better than those who sat-in: that is not to say, however, that they would have been any more successful had they chosen a different course of action"(2).

Summary.

This chapter set out to examine the extent to which occupations differed and what difference this made to their character and their potential. Some differences were discernable according to whether an occupation concerned redundancy, pay or other issues; whether it was a full or partial occupation - and what kind of partial occupation; whether it was led by/heavily involved women or men workers; and depending upon the region and industry involved.

These differences, however, need to be treated with great caution. Primarily they must be viewed in the particular context of socio-economic unrest of which they formed an integral part. The relatively small number of cases involved in this study makes generalisation difficult. For example, when considering industrial or regional variations we have, respectively, 177 cases to relate to 27 industries and 196 cases to relate to 10 regions. It only takes the involvement of a politically left leadership in one or two workplaces to cause a regional or industrial "imbalance" in the figures; this was likely the case with the occupations in the print industry and, to a lesser extent, in the construction industry. Likewise it only takes one or two

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1. A.J.Mills, 1976a, p.57.

2. Ibid, p.83.

groups of workers to be inspired, for example, by the UCS work-in to bring about a regional or industrial "imbalance"; this was the case with the Sexton and the Gainsbrough occupations in East Anglia.

By and large the differences are ones of potential - a potential which, due to the specific nature of the left leadership and of the stage of socio-economic crisis, was never given the opportunity to be realized.

In short, the workplace occupations of the period should be treated, more or less, as a collective phenomenon. A series of actions which were developed and drawn together by a fairly small but relatively influencial section of the British left. Of those cases for which full information is available 92% were also involved in political strikes and 62% were associated with a politically left leadership - mainly the CPGB or their front organisations (LCDTU/Building and Print Workers' Charter Groups); 98% had associations with other occupations. It is, of course, difficult to assertain the extent that 'politicisation' preceded occupation and how far it developed as a result of occupation. The act itself likely signifies a changed consciousness among those embarking upon it: 'the revolution may well change people's consciousness but the process itself is a sign of a great development in that direction! '. The extent of political association/experience and inter occupation association probably tell us more about gauging shifts in consciousness then any reference to occupation type or variation.

# CHAPTER 5

## WORKPLACE OCCUPATIONS AND POLITICAL ECONOMY

"A major factor to be emphasised is the development from 1969 onward of a series of political strikes, unknown since the 1920s in Britain. (A) trade union movement schooled in political strikes is more likely to engage in other forms of radical action (i.e., occupations) . . , at least . . . such experience is . . . a strongly associated factor".

### Introduction.

This chapter has four aims; (i) to outline the nature of Britain's economic crisis in the late 1960s/early 1970s[1], (ii) to examine governmental response in the field of industrial relations, (iii) to explain the advent of political strikes, and (iv) to show a link between political strikes and workplace occupations.

That 'Britain, at that time, experienced an economic crisis in many ways unparalleled since the 1930s depression' is not contentious[2]. The governments of the day are revealed as responding to the crisis by introducing legislation aimed at curbing trade union power and restricting wage levels. Indications are that this helped to politicise sections of trade unionists into engaging in overtly political strikes.

It is argued that the development of a new and radical form of industrial action depended on the existance of a situation that itself contained radically different factors. Certainly in no other post-war period did workplace occupations occur to such an extent and over long periods of time: the 'work-in' is a phenomenon entirely of the 1970s.

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1. It is not essential to go over at great lengths ground which has been comprehensively covered elsewhere. Cf. P.Anderson (1975), A.Glyn and B.Sutcliffe (1972), K.Coates (1970, 1973), J.Gollan, (1975), M.Kidron (1970). Although differing in explanation of causes these works agree on the manifestations of the crisis.

2. A fact not denied by commentatators of the right or the left. Cf. B.Ramelson, 1972.

The main factors which fundamentally differentiate 1966-75 from earlier post-war decades are the continuing high levels of unemployment and direct government intervention in the field of industrial relations; the former providing the pressure for action with the latter providing the basis for the ideological committment to a radically different form of action.

Certainly a link is evident between political strikes and workplace occupations. Both types of action involved a minority of British workers and yet in many cases those involved in one were involved in the other. It is not argued, however, that politically naive workers were transformed into revolutionaries. That the largest number of actions involved well organised, militant, sections of the trade union is undeniable. What is argued is that generally militant workers were taken to a higher stage of class struggle; that as a result of the struggles undergone against government legislation they were more able to break through that unconscious barrier that has prevented British workers from seriously encroaching on property rights.

Britain in Crisis.

While high unemployment was a manifestation of the severity of Britain's economic crisis government intervention in industrial relations was a desparate response to the same problem. In various ways the crisis was unprecedented. By 1972 the unemployment level nationally was officially at four percent. Thus, in the first year of the development of workplace occupations unemployment was running at its highest level since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Within the national total regional rates were very telling.

Areas, such as the West Midlands, which had been by-passed in previous crises faced unemployment rates of over seven percent[1]. The biggest drop in employment over the preceeding year had, significantly, been in manufacturing. Unemployment of the registered "wholly unemployed" had not, by 1972, dropped in seven years; the longest period without a drop since records have been kept. Redundancies also reached new record levels. A large number of these were due to so-called "rationalisation" schemes and mergers which were widespread from the mid-1960s. Small firms[2] were also contributing to the records in the number of closures and bankruptcies experienced[3]. The year also marked the longest period of economic stagnation in post-war British history, accompanied by a new high inflation rate[4]. Against this background there was a decline in investment. In the vital machinertools sector, for example, there was a decline in investment of eight percent compared with the previous year of 1970-71. In short, the crisis of Britain's economy by early 1972 - judged by unemployment, growth rate, investment, and inflation - was deeper and of longer duration than at any time since the 1930s[5].

This critical period was to face a trade union movement which was stronger than at any other period of history. The stage was set for an explosive industrial conflict situation as the government of the day sought to deal with the crisis by holding back wages and curtailing th

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1. The West Midlands rate was 7.1%. Department of Employment Gazette, May, 1973.
2. Those firms employing less than two-hundred people.
3. 'The Report of the Bolton Committee' - quoted in B.Ramelson (Feb,1972).
4. In the preceeding year, 1970-71, there was a 10% average rise in the cost of living. B.Ramelson (Feb, 1972).
5. The analysis of the crisis is drawn from Ramelson (Feb, 1972).

the strength of the unions[1].

The Labour Government (1966-70) might possibly have defused the situation had they taken action to win over the union militants, instead they introduced a White Paper outlining plans to restrict trade union activity. In this way a new dimension was added; the politicisation of industrial relations in a direct fashion. In addition, consideration was given to the legal constraint of wage demands.

A situation was approaching where many trade union activities, previously regarded as 'normal' or 'usual', would be made unlawful and thence direct political challenges to the law if continued. Secondly, the pursuance of wage claims, above a certain level or within a given period, would also become challenges to legislation which declared such claims unlawful.

Within this context a whole number of industrial actions was given a political character. To this was added a number of consciously political industrial actions taken by sections of trade unionists and specifically aimed at forcing a change in government policy in regard to trade union legislation.

Government Intervention in Industrial Relations.

Some form of government intervention in industrial relations has been a fact of life since the second world-war[2]. During the war strikes were illegal and wages were adjusted to the cost of living by compulsary arbitration. These laws were maintained until 1951. Wage "restraint" policies were enacted by the first post-war Labour Government and continued by succeeding Conservative governments. The Macmillan Government,

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1. Cf. T.Cliff(1970), K.Coates (1973), and R.Hyman (1972).

2. Cf. H.A.Turner and F.Wilson (1975).

for example, introduced a "price plateau" in the late 1950s by inter alia, encouraging employers to resist union demands. Faced with economic crisis in 1961 Chancellor Selwyn Lloyd announced a series of emergency measures which included a "pay pause"[1]: wage increases were tied to changes in the level of national productivity but a severe governmental credit squeeze at the same time kept down productivity. Lloyd was successful in imposing his pay pause on public employees.

Prices, Incomes and Productivity: In October 1964 a new Labour Government came to office; the first in thirteen years. Faced with an enormous balance of payments deficit it responded by borrowing from foreign banks, pushing up the bank rate, imposing a fifteen percent surcharge on imports, and introducing a new incomes policy[2].

On incomes policy the new Government began by appealing to the trade unions for voluntary restraint. Initially it seemed as if this policy might be successful. In December 1964 a 'Joint Declaration of Intent on Productivity, Prices and Incomes' was signed by representatives of employers and the T.U.C. This was followed by a conference of (TUC affiliated) union executive committees, in April 1965, which ratified the signing of the Declaration and agreed to go along with a Government "norm" for wage increases restricting them to three percent. To ensure that this policy was adhered to the TUC General Council set up its own committee to vet new wage claims and ensure they were in line with the "norm".

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1. The crisis was occasioned by a revaluation of the Deutsch Mark, a result of which was that short-term speculative money moved out of Britain and created panic among economic policy makers. Cf. V.Allen (1966), p.63.

2. Allen (1966), pp.65, 75-76. On this occasion an I.M.F. (International Monetary Fund) loan was sought. The result was that it was granted on condition that wage restraint was introduced and cut backs in public expenditure effected.

A further two months later the Government established a 'National Board for Prices and Incomes' (PIB) - under the chairmanship of former Conservative M.P. Aubrey Jones. Initially the PIB had very limited powers of intervention into industrial disputes: it could barely induce employers and unions to delay wage claims under discussion. The Government, not entirely satisfied with its voluntary arrangements, moved to rectify the situation by introducing a "limited degree of statutory reinforcement". The September TUC Congress, after a fierce debate, voted to support this measure[1]. A 'Prices and Incomes Bill' was published in February of the new year (1966) and was to give the Government power to delay wage (and price) increases[2]. Heavy fines were to be extracted from trade union bodies and individual union members who caused a breach of the legislation[3], with the prospect of imprisonment for failure to pay the fine. It has been claimed that,

"For the first time in British trade union history the government, and a Labour Government at that, had announced its intention to intervene in the collective bargaining process in peace-time" (4).

Four days after the Bill's publication the Labour Party fought and won a General Election, being returned to office with a large majority. The 'Prices and Incomes Act' became law in August but contained enactments beyond the powers envisaged in the February Bill. It confered power to enforce a wage norm and the Government quickly set out to cut

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1. The vote was by 5¼ million to just over 3¼ million. (At the April Congress the voting was 6.6 million to 1.8 million).

2. The maximum penalty for failing to notify intended increases was £50, and for implementing increases during a wages and price standstill £500.

3. Individual workers were liable to as big a fine as a trade union or an employers' association.

4. J.Gollan (1975), p.222. See also V.Allen (1966).

back on earnings, claiming that,

"the country needs a breathing space of twelve months in which productivity can catch up with the excessive increases in incomes which have been taking place" (1).

What this was to mean in effect was an incomes policy aimed at altering the method of payments away from piece work and to measured day-work. It has been argued that this was in part designed to reduce the participation of shop stewards in customary continuous local bargaining by providing high fixed earnings in return for a high level of output[2]. This system was introduced at Vauxhall's and the Rootes group followed suit.

From now on the criteria for wage increases were linked to productivity agreements[3]. The Labour Government's concept of "productivity", however, was quite broad in so far as it encouraged unions to give up so-called "restrictive practices" in return for wage increases. Unions were not slow in exploiting the weaknesses in this policy and although, for example, there were 289 productivity agreements reported to the Ministry of Labour for the two months January-February 1967 in many cases no real concessions had been made by the trade unions involved. Productivity agreements were becoming the "Achilles heel" of the Government's wage-freeze policy[4].

In a short space of time a Labour Government had attempted, not altogether unsuccessfully, to restrict wage increases through the force of

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1. H.Wilson in the House of Commons, July 20th, 1966.

2. J.Gollan(1975), p.223.

3. This criteria was proposed by a previous (Conservative) Government in 1962. The White Paper, 'Incomes Policy: The Next Step'.

4. J.Gollan (1975), p.223.

law, introduce a wages policy which effectively attempted to undermine shop floor representation, and which aimed at eroding (what trade unionists call) "protective practices".

Anti-Trade Union legislation: From the moment it took office in 1964 the Labour Government expressed concern about the power of shop floor organisation. It began with Prime Minister Wilson calling for special measures to reduce unofficial strikes in the motor industry. Very soon representatives of the British Employers' Federation and the TUC were brought together to jointly investigate unofficial strikes for a period of a year, beginning October 1964. Less than four months later a 'Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations' was established[1].

This latter Commission, under the chairmanship of Lord Donovan, published its findings in June 1968. It expressed great concern about "wage drift" and claimed that its cause lay in the development of work-shop bargaining by shop floor representatives. It recorded that, "Britain has two systems of industrial relations": the "formal system" embodied in the "official institutions" of unions and employers' associations, through which certain levels of wages and minimum conditions are established for national and industry levels; and the "informal system" which, through negotiations between shop stewards and local management at plant level, had been responsible for almost doubling payments agreed at the formal level[2]. The (Donovan) Commission concluded that if this form of wage drift was to be contained then the informal system would have to be

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1. The Conservatives had originally proposed such a commission but the Labour Party had, during the 1964 General Election, rejected the idea. J.Gollan (1975), p.221.

2. See sections 46 and 52.

curtailed:

"So long as workplace bargaining remains informal, autonomous and fragmented the drift of earnings away from rates of pay cannot be brought under control" (1).

One way of tackling this, according to Donovan, was that,

"Well-regulated company and factory agreements (be introduced, which) would enable companies to exercise effective control over their own wage and salary-bills . . . " (2).

Beyond this the Commission contrarily argued that "voluntary collective bargaining" should remain intact and that no legislation be introduced for the imposition of legal sanctions against unofficial strikers.

The Government moved beyond the proposals of the Commission. In January (1969) a White Paper, 'In Place of Strife' was introduced which proposed penal sanctions against unofficial strikes, and the power for the imposition of a "cooling off" period on any official strike deemed to be against the national interest. The cooling off period would have the effect of delaying a strike for several weeks. A Commission for Industrial Relations (CIR) was established at the same time. Its duties included the promotion of factory and company productivity agreements.

The Unions Respond: The effect of this White Paper on the trade union movement was unprecedented in post-war Britain. Within days of its introduction three trade unions were pressing the TUC General Council to call a special conference to discuss action against it[3]. The following month the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) added

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1. Quoted in J.Gollan (1975), p.228.

2. Ibid.

3. The unions were the Waterman's Union (WTBU), the printers union (SOGAT), and the builders' union (AUBTW).

their voice [1]. The TUC General Council, meanwhile, sought a meeting with the Prime Minister to see assurances that legislation was not going to be introduced earlier than originally stated, i.e., after the September Congress. Wilson could not give those assurances, claiming that,

"the public were looking for action against unofficial strikers who brought about industrial anarchy" (2).

On 15th April the Chancellor announced that a short interim Bill was to be introduced, during that current Parliamentary session, to deal with some of the main aspects of the White Paper.

Disturbed at the prospect that TUC General Council argued that,

"To put on the Statute Book the imposition of fines in industrial relations would make it possible to widen their use in future" (3).

Now the cine technicians union (ACTAT) called on the General Council to organise a one-day national strike in protest. This was rejected but a special conference was called for June 5th[4]. In the meantime, under the leadership of a rank-and-file body, a quarter-of-a-million workers took protest strike action on May 1st. This first political strike for several decades was followed by the first special full TUC Congress in over forty years. The Congress declared its opposition to any form of penalties being put on trade unionists, but went some way to offering to voluntarily police its own members[5].

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1. The General Council were of the view that "it was not at that stage necessary to have a special meeting . . . since discussions with the Employment Secretary had indicated that there would be no legislation until well after the September Congress had been given the opportunity to express its views . . ." TUC Report, 1969, p.209.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ten other unions had joined the call for a special conference.

5. The General Council were empowered to intervene in inter-union and "unauthorised" and "unconstitutional" strikes; making recommendations or awards which would be binding on unions and their members.

In the face of the May Day political strikes and TUC opposition the Government, on June 19th, gave a pledge to drop its White Paper proposals concerning penal sanctions and accepted (previously rejected) assurances from the TUC. In the words of John Gollan (1975),

"The events of the first half of 1969 made many trade unions more deeply political. The Government had been seen as a partisan in industrial relations and a vulnerable one at that. Workers were shown that they could use their collective strength to force a government to change its policy. This was a new factor in British industrial relations" (1).

The Tories Return: In attempting to resolve an economic crisis of some severity Labour Government had resorted to productivity linked wage bargaining and anti-trade union legislation. Trade union strength and skills had undermined the first and defeated the second. Now the unions moved to deal a death blow to Prices and Incomes legislation. At the September TUC Congress later in 1969 the draughtsmen's union successfully moved a resolution "demanding the repeal of the Prices and Incomes Act of 1966" and calling on "the General Council to lead affiliated unions in aggressive opposition"[2]. Before any real major offensive could be waged the country was in the midst of a new General Election which resulted in the return of a Conservative Government. It has been argued that the result reflected the fact that,

"Large sections of the Labour Movement were disillusioned and looked towards self-reliance or militant industrial action rather than towards a Labour Government to protect their interests" (3).

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1. p.231

2. TUC Report (1969), p.561. The union - Draughtsmen and Allied Technicians Association (DATA) had officially supported the May Day political strike, and the call for a special TUC conference.
   On a show of hands the DATA resolution had been declared lost but a card vote saw it carried by 4.6 million to 4.2 million.

3. J.Gollan (1975), p.234.

The new Conservative Government faced an even greater crisis which included a new dimension; a large movement prepared to use industrial action to change government policy. Both, as the Government saw it, would have to be tackled head on in the form of tough new anti-trade union legislation. On 5th October (1970) it published a 'Consultative Document' and two months later an 'Industrial Relations Bill'. It was intended that new legislation should end certain immunities protecting the right to strike, make the majority of collective agreements legally binding, outlaw 'closed shop' agreements, establish an 'Industrial Relations Court' with the powers of a High Court, confer the power to impose strike ballots and cooling off periods, and to prescribe a series of "unfair" practices for which unions and their members could be legally penalised. This became law just under a year later.

Over the next two years or so the 'Industrial Relations Act, 1971' was used to impose a strike ballot on railway workers planning strike action over wages, to order dockers to stop picketing, to order the TGWU to stop a 'blacking' action, to order the AUEW to accept as a member a man they did not want in the union, and to order engineers to end a strike over union recognition. In the course of these actions trade unions were fined heavily and five rank-and-file dockers were jailed. The AUEW had its funds sequestered. In all cases none of the actions of the unions would have been considered "unlawful" only a short period earlier; transport workers showing solidarity with striking members, railwaymen threatening to strike over pay, engineers striking over union recognition and only accepting into membership people of their own choosing, and dockers picketing in defence of jobs. Now, by the very nature of the law,

pursuance of such activities turned them into political challenges.

Alongside this new Act the new Government introduced legislation to legally restrain pay settlements. At first they relied on industrial relations legislation to restrain union action and consequently wage demands. Ted Heath had stated that, prices and incomes policy,

"has been tried in the past and failed. Nobody can show any reason why it should succeed in the future . . . in a free enterprise economy . . . people (should) take their own decisions and run their own lives" (1).

A "voluntary" wages policy, known as "N minus one", was introduced[2]. The first test for the new policy ended in Government victory against striking postmen. In January 1971 the Union of Post Office Workers (UPW) began a national strike for a fifteen percent pay increase; they had been offered eight. The strike ended forty-seven days later - on the Post Office's terms[3]. The Government's "voluntary" approach appeared to be working.

It was the action of the miners' union (NUM) which appears to have prompted the Government into introducing legislation on wages. The 1971 annual NUM conference adopted a resolution from the Scottish Area calling for a large increase in pay and instructing the leadership to use industrial action if necessary. On September 14th (1971) the union presented the National Coal Board (NCB) with their pay claim. On Government instructions this claim was rejected. On November 1st the union began an overtime ban and, after a successful strike ballot[4], a national strike was

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1. June 18th, 1971. Quoted in 'Labour Research', Vol.62, No.3, Mar.'73, p.54

2. 'N' refered to the norm or previous wage settlement. Each new settlement was to be at least one percent less than the previous one.

3. The union had paid too little attention to previously gaining support from telecommunications workers, or other sections of workers. The TUC General Council were equally slow to move into support. In the event the strike actually helped to boost the profits of the Post Office. R.Hyman (1972), p.36.

4. The annual conference changed the rules to allow a "simple" and not a two-thirds majority decide the issue. A strike was not called in 1970 after a pit-head ballot resulted in 55% in favour. After the rule change a 59% vote in favour carried the day in December 1971.

called for January 9th of the new year.

The strike was to become significant in a number of ways. It was the first national miners' strike since 1926. It involved widespread solidarity including blacking action by railwaymen. It witnessed the development of new styles of action such as the "flying picket" and the "mass picket"[1], and involved a one day solidarity strike and march of Birmingham engineering workers[2].

As the strike began to bite many firms closed down production to a three-day week basis. The Government by now had set up a Court of Enquiry and appealed to the miners' to end their strike. The miners' refused. They also refused to accept the report of the Court of Enquiry which went some way towards the miners' demands. Finally, the Government felt forced to meet with NUM leaders and concede their demands[3]. On Monday 28th February a victorious NUM called off the strike.

The miners' action had clearly dented the Government's wage policy and several other sections of workers moved into action; chalking up similar pay advancements. Among these were building workers who, in July, staged the first national strike in their history[4]. Employing various of the tactics developed during the miners' strike (e.g., the flying picket) the builders fought a militant ten weeks battle before finally calling off the strike with the major element of their claim won.

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1. When miners were effectively prevented from communicating with people crossing picket lines they decided to physically prevent admission by force of numbers. The flying picket is said to have originated with the Yorkshire miners who would send coach loads of pickets to what ever point they felt needed it. Cf. J.Gollan (1975).

2. This was a turning point of the miners' strike. Thousands of police had been used to prevent the mass picketing of the Saltley Coke Depot and many arrests had been made. The police ended their show of strength when 10,000 engineers went on strike and joined the mass picket.

3. Several other demands, not in the original claim were also granted.

4. They were demanding a £10 week pay increase and a reduction in hours.

The Government now moved to abandon its "voluntary" incomes policy, and in November introduced the 'Counter Inflation (Temporary Provisions) Bill'. The Bill set out to provide the Government with the legal machinery for the imposition of a wage freeze. To this end a Pay Board and a Prices Commission were established. The freeze was to last from the time the new law came into being (at the end of that month) for a period of ninety days. No increase in wages and salaries were to be allowed over and above that which had existed on or before 6th November 1972. The Minister of Employment was empowered to serve an order on any employer telling him to desist from paying a particular increase: failure to comply with such an order or interference with the enactment of it ( i.e., strikes) carried heavy fines[1]. The fines could be levied against all of a trade union's funds whether they were strike funds or not[2]. Not only strike action was to count as an 'unfair' action under the new law also included were 'go-slows', 'work-to-rules', etc where such actions were deemed to be in breach of contract.

The White Paper which accompanied the new Bill[3] set out the rules for the standstill. All increases were to be frozen in regard to any improvements in working conditions including wages, holiday agreements, hours of work, overtime rates, and so on. The only exception was occupational pensions, and pay increases due to job promotion or age.

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1. Fines of up to £400 could be imposed on summary conviction, with an unlimited fine applying to a conviction on an indictment.

2. In line with the Law Lords decision over Heatons Transport (St.Helens) Ltd.V The T.G.W.U. a trade union was liable for the actions of its shop stewards. Cf.Labour Research, Vol.61, No.9, Sept. 1972,pp.182-3.

3. 'A Programme for Controlling Inflation: The First Stage' (Cmnd.5125)

But increases in earnings were allowable if they resulted,

"directly from extra effort or output under existing arrangements, e.g., increases in piecework earnings stemming from increased output" (1).

Pay increased agreed before the freeze but not due to be paid during it were to be deferred.

As with the previous Government's legal restraint, the Conservative's approach to price control was seen by many trade unionists as one sided. There were to be various exceptions to the price freeze, and regulations concerning breaches placed much emphasis on voluntary co-operation. Increases were allowable where firms

"consider that their costs (either import costs or domestic costs) have risen so far that it is impracticable for them not to be absorbed" (2).

In such cases firms had to notify the relevant government department. This was, however, amended shortly after to exclude food manufacturing companies ("except the very largest"). Perhaps not surprisingly the price of fresh foods rose by 10.2% and by 4.4% for all foods in the first eleven weeks of the freeze[3].

Dividends, it seemed, were also to be given uneven treatment compared to wages. Any increase in dividend payments over the previous sums realised were to be deferred until after the freeze. Unlike deferred wages which were not recoverable, dividends that were deferred were added to the shareholders' capital value of shareholdings.

If certain trade unionists found this 'phase one' incomes policy harsh the Government attempted to console them with the idea that it was only a temporary measure. The 'Financial Times' felt otherwise,

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1. 'Labour Research, Vol.61, No.12. Dec. 1972, p.261.
2. Ibid.
3. Labour Research, Vol.62, No.3, Mar. 1973, p.53.

"It is clear that the Government regards (the legal provisions of the Bill) as a more or less permanent feature of the landscape" (1).

Whatever the truth of the matter the 'Counter Inflation Act' became law in 1973 and before the first stage of the freeze had come to an end a new White Paper appeared[2]. Legal restraint was to be continued until the autumn, and then a third stage of restraint would be introduced. Under "stage two" trade unions were allowed to bargain for a limit of four percent increase in wages plus one pound. Penalties were kept in force, and prices were still allowed the same exceptions. Dividends were to be treated as before and profits were to be "restricted" to the extent that they would not be allowed to rise above the average of the two best of the preceding five years[3]. There was to be a freeze on all business rents but, in a classic case of one-sidedness, the rents of two million council tenants were to be increased by fifty pence.

When the "third stage" of the incomes policy came into being the Conservatives had been reasonably successful. The new stage limited wage increases to seven percent of the wages bill or £2. 25p, but all improvements (including luncheon vouchers, etc) were to be taken out of this total. (Workers achieving a wage increase were then prohibited from seeking any further increases for a period of at least twelve months). Of the seven percent only half of it was allowable without productivity improvements.

Within a short space of time a number of new trade union actions had been added to the list of "unlawful". Taking any action to secure

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1. The 19th January 1973 edition.
2. 'The Programme for Controlling Inflation: The Second Stage' (Cmnd.5205).
3. The five years included 1968 which was an exceptional year for profits.

improvements in working conditions above a certain level, or any improvements at all where some had already been achieved in a given period, were now illegal. A whole number of actions were thus made directly political challenges to the law of the land. This was to be the case with railwaymen, firemen, ambulance drivers, dockers, car workers and miners who all sought improvements during the period which were outside of the pay norms.

It was the action of the miners that was once again to defeat government policy but this time, given the nature of the industrial relations situation, also to defeat the Government itself.

The NUM put forward a new wage claim towards the end of 1973 but the NCB, bound by the Counter Inflation Act, offered only the permissible limit; a fraction of the claim. Once again the NUM began with an overtime ban but this time the Government responded by declaring a State of Emergency. The miners stepped up their action and a strike was called - this time with an even greater majority vote from pit-head balloting. This time the strike action was a strike against the law of the land, not in defiance of an appeal for restraint. As the Industrial Organiser of the Communist Party put it,

"Undoubtedly the miners . . . in challing Phase III are also challenging the Government, and are therefore participating in industrial action which is highly political in content" (1).

As this strike began to bite the Government took the unprecedented action of ordering that most of industry cut their production to a three-day week. The order may have been aimed at frightening the NUM into retreat; but it failed. In the midst of the strike the Conservative Government resigned and called a General Election[2]. They appealed to the electorate

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1. B.Ramelson (1973), p.16
2. The election was called for February 28th (1974).

on the issue of "Who runs the country - the Unions or the Government". They lost the election!

It was the first time a government had resigned in the middle of a major national strike claiming that they 'were unable to rule in such a situation'. It was the first time that an industrial stoppage had provoked a General Election and indirectly brought about the downfall of a Government. But, as Ramelson(1973) argues, the Government,

"introduced laws to prevent normal negotiations on their merits, They are the ones who have converted every economic and industrial issue into a political one. They are responsible for changing every wage struggle from being an argument with the particular boss or bosses into one against the Government" (1).

The Advent of the Political Strike.

In a short number of years the industrial relations situation was radically changed in Britain - initially due to direct government intervention. As the 60's came to a close the officialdom of the trade union movement was offering to accept voluntary wage restraint, a small amount of legislative restraint, and to police its own members. By the middle of the 1970s large sections of the trade union movement had led an onslaught against wages policy, trade union legislation and achieved the downfall of the government of the day.

An early strike to be made political was a national strike of seamen in 1966. This strike marked the beginning of a new wave of militancy among lower paid workers but it was the first challenge to the Labour Government's new incomes policy. The National Union of Seamen (NUS) were by no means a militant union. They were striking for substantial pay increases and a reduction in working hours to forty per week.

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1. p.16.

When this was not agreed to the strike began on May 16th. That same day Harold Wilson delivered a broadcast stating that,

"if our urgent advice (is) not taken it would be the duty of the Government . . . to resist the action (the seamen) have taken. Because this would be a strike against the State - against the community. But this isn't all. What is at issue here is our national prices and incomes policy; to accept this demand would breach the dykes of our prices and incomes policy" (1).

On the 23rd of May the Government declared a State of Emergency, and set up a Court of Enquiry. The NUS Executive, however, refused to accept the Court's report as a basis of negotiation and the strike continued. It eventually ended on July 1st with the seamen winning a pay increase above the 'norm' and with a reduction in the working week to forty-two hours. This was largely achieved with the aid of other sections of trade unionists; particularly dockers. The seamen had won a marginal victory but not before the government had turned their strike into a political one. The Prime Minister even claimed that behind the strike was "a tightly knit group of politically motivated men" who were influencing the strike to their own ends. This group, he claimed, operated out of King Street (headquarters of the CPGB)[2]. The situation was developing where industrial actions were steadily made into political ones through government intervention.

Trade Union Laws and Political Strikes: The introduction of the 'Prices and Incomes Bill' in 1966 led to the establishment of a rank and file body pledged to organise trade union action against it - the Liaision Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions (LCDTU). This body

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1. Quoted in J.Gollan (1975), p.224. My emphasis, AJM.

2. Wilson personally named in the House of Commons the following people claimed to be part of this group: communist docker, Jack Dash; the general secretary of the WLTBU union, Harry Watson; communist NUS Executive member, Gordon Norris and non-CP members Joe Kenny and Jim Slater. Also 'involved' were the members of the CPGB's "industrial department".

was to play an important role in organising the various strikes against 'In Place of Strife' and the 'Industrial Relations Act'. The strike on May Day 1969, in fact, was one of the few consciously political strikes in British labour history.

The May Day strike had been supported by the draughtsmen's union (DATA). That same union led the onslaught on the 'Prices and Incomes Act' at the TUC Congress that year. Before any campaign could be launched, however, the Conservatives were returned to power. Later that year the new Government introduced its 'Consultative Document' followed by the 'Industrial Relations Bill'. The LCDTU countered by holding a conference in November to organise action against any proposed new laws. The conference called for widespread strike action on December 8th - the date when the new Bill was due to be published. More than half-a-million trade unionists responded to the call.

It was the nature of the previous success of the LCDTU and the sheer scale of planned Government interference in industrial relations which led such a large number to support what was, after all, unofficial and politically conscious strikes against the Government[1]. In addition support from official union bodies also grew. This time the draughtsmen - now amalgamated in the engineering union[2] - were joined in support by the construction engineering section of the same amalgamation (CEU) and the print union (SOGAT). Various regional and district committees of unions also supported the strike action.

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1. So large had been the initial response to the conference that the venue had to be changed twice to get a hall large enough. Delegates were elected from factories, pits, depots, trade union branches and district bodies to what was, on the day, "the largest rank and file gathering in the history of the British trade union movement". J.Gollan, (1975), pp.229-30.

2. From hereon refered to as the Technical and Supervisory Section (TASS) of the AUEW.

In January a further forty-five thousand Midlands workers staged a one-day strike against the Bill, and two days later the TUC launched an "education" campaign designed to put the view of trade unions to the public. On January 12th the political strike phenomenon reached a new stage when the TUC General Council called for protest meetings "to be held during lunch time, but to be extended into working hours if wished". Many thousands responded, including 160,000 who took strike action. The size of the rank and file response to the two LCDTU called political strikes had pushed the TUC General Council into joining with such moves, albeit on a more limited scale.

Rank and file action was also having its impact on the AUEW. In 1969 - as the AEF - they opposed the May Day strike but later that year the union experienced a number of changes towards the left - including the election of Hugh Scanlon to the Presidency. By 1970 they had moved to a position where they allowed their members a free hand in regard to the December 8th strike: the union neither officially opposed nor supported the strike. In fact, many thousands of their members swelled the ranks of the strikers. By 1971 the Union had moved steadily leftwards and now moved to call a political strike of their members for March 1st. Two other unions[1] joined in the call, along with the LCDTU, and over two million struck on the day: one of the largest strikes in British trade union history, and as a political strike only surpassed by the events of the General Strike.

Meanwhile the TUC General Council decided to recommend to all constituent trade unions that they should refuse to register under the requirements of the new Bill should it become Law. This was followed with

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1. The unions were the the boilermakers' union (ASBSBSW) and the sheet metal workers (NUSMW).

a national protest march in London on Sunday 21st February supported by over a quarter-of-a-million people[1]. The TUC General Council also called a special conference for the 18th March to discuss opposition to the Bill. The AUEW chose that day to stage a second political strike against the Bill. This time the powerful TGWU added its official support; many of its members, from branch to regional level, had supported all the earlier strikes. Now over three million workers came out on strike, this time surpassing the General Strike[2]. Many hundreds of the strikers lobbied the special TUC conference.

Against such a background the conference met and decided to pursue a policy of non-cooperation with the Government. Constituent unions were advised not to register or to recognise any agencies established under the provisions of the impending law.

In August the 'Industrial Relations Act' came into effect and a National Industrial Relations Court (NIRC) was established under the Presidency of Sir John Donaldson. The Court's first major action was against the TGWU. In March of 1972 it ordered the union to stop its members from 'blacking' Heaton's Transport (St.Helens) Ltd. The union refused to attend the Court's hearing but it did advise its members to lift their action. It had been the first union to officially defy the law. The Court responded by fining the TGWU five-thousand pounds and a month later a further fifty-thousand for continued 'contempt of court'[3].

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1. The march was well attended despite poor organisation on the part of the TUC General Council.

2. TUC membership in 1926 was just over 4.1 million and only sections of these were called out to join the General Strike; not all at the same time.

3. The Court was both concerned at the union's continued refusal to have any dealings with it, and the fact that the 'blacking' of Heatons continued.

In the face of this decision the TUC General Council weakened and altered the decision of the special conference. It now claimed that trade unions could attend the NIRC for the purpose of "defending themselves". It also recommended to the TGWU that it pay the fines.

The General Council gave further recognition to the Court by appealing to it to change its decision regarding the liability of unions for the actions of its members. The Court refused[1]. The decision, however, was pursued by the TGWU to the Court of Appeal where it was reversed. There Lord Denning held that, 'if Parliament had intended that an unregistered union, in contrast to a registered union, was to be penalised in this way, it would have said so'.

"By keeping silent on its liability for shop stewards, Parliament had left it for the courts to decide. And the courts must decide it according to law, not influenced in the least by any political consideration" (2).

The TGWU had seemed, on that 12th June, to have won a significant victory, but very different repercussions were about to be realised. The NIRC now moved directly against the union's shop stewards; ordering London dockers to stop picketing the Midland Cold Storage plant. The stewards both refused to attend the Court and to stop the picketing and on 21st July Sir John Donaldson ordered their arrest, i.e., of the five leading stewards. London docks came to a halt as dockers walked off in protest. Hull dockers followed, and support came from Liverpool (where dockers were already on strike over a local dispute). By the day's end twenty-six thousand dock workers were on strike throughout the country.

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1. The Court declared that a union was liable for the 'unfair' industrial practices of its shop stewards even if it had used its best endeavours short of disciplinary action to encourage them to desist.

2. Quoted in Labour Research, Vol.61, No.9, Sept.1972, pp.182-3.

They were joined by London print workers on the 23rd; only the 'Sunday Times' appeared that day. By mid-week, despite the fact that it was the summer holiday period, over one-million workers had joined in the strike. Demonstrations were held in many major cities. On the Wednesday afternoon the TUC General Council warned that a one-day General Strike would take place on Monday (31st July) if the five shop stewards were not released from prison[1]. The politicisation of British industrial relations had reached its zenith.

In this tense situation the Judicial Committee of the House of Lords were meeting to consider the decision of the Court of Appeal. It decided unanimously to overturn that decision, ruling that the unions were liable for the actions of their shop stewards, and restoring the fifty-five thousand pound fine on the TGWU. It has been argued that this decision led directly to the release of the Pentonville Five[2], but that does not quite explain why the Government felt it necessary to appoint an 'Official Solicitor' to appear before the NIRC on their behalf. It is likely that the Government feared that the action of the NIRC had opened up the prospect of widespread industrial and social unrest and had headed off trouble by using the strange device of the 'Official Solicitor' who normally only appears for the insane or those incapable of defending themselves: the Pentonville Five were among the most articulate trade unionists in the country.

The day after their release most of the sympathy strikes ended,

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1. The five were to become known as "the Pentonville Five" after the jail where they were imprisoned.
   The TUC General Strike decision was moved by the AUEW and supported by 18 votes to 7.

2. Discussion with TUC Education Officer (E.Hoyes), February, 1976.

but a new series of strikes broke out in protest at the Law Lords' decision. On July 31st, the planned General Strike now called off, thousands of workers nonetheless did strike against the Act[1].

The situation had now been reached where political strikes had been created of 'normal' industrial disputes. This gave rise to a body (LCDTU) which organised conscious political strikes against government legislation. Rank and file action had been very successful in defeating such legislation, and the situation developed to a point where major unions, and eventually the TUC General Council, were officially giving a lead. Again the offical action was successful, this time in gaining the release of imprisoned workers. Most unions were still continuing to refuse to have any dealing with the NIRC (even for "defensive" reasons), and the majority of TUC unions remained unregistered. The Pentonville Five, now out of prison, continued their "unlawful" picketing of Midland Cold Storage Company.

The NIRC was to face another onslaught. Later in 1972 it decided, wrongly, to take on the militant AUEW by ordering it to accept into membership a former member, Jeffery Goad[2]. Goad had been rejected for membership by the Sudbury branch of the union. The AUEW Executive Committee unanimously refused to appear before the Court and its local branch continued to refuse Goad membership. The NIRC fined the union five thousand pounds for contempt. Now the law of the land were directly

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1. The majority of strikers were in Birmingham; five thousand of whom staged a protest march through the city, organised by the trades council. Other strikes took place in Glasgow, Leeds and Brighton.

2. Goad resigned from the union in 1967; refusing to obey a union order to donate a day's pay to charity as penalty for working during an official one-day strike. In 1972 an Industrial Tribunal ruled that he was a member of the union: Goad had taken this action after being refused membership by the local, Sudbury, branch.

attempting to decide unions' rule books for them. The union refused to pay the fine against them and the NIRC ordered that the union's banker, Hill Samuel, to give up five thousand pounds plus one-thousand expenses[1] from union funds. The following day Goad's fellow workers, at CAV Sudbury, voted not to work with him: he was sent home on full pay. The NIRC that same day fined the union a further fifty thousand pounds and gave them one week to pay. The Union again refused and this time called on its membership to 'defend the union'. Over the next month between a half and three-quarters-of-a-million engineers staged strikes against the NIRC action. The NIRC once again seized the fine, this time by ordering the union's stockbrokers to hand over gilt-edged stock. The AUEW had lost fifty-six thousand pounds in its militant stand but the engineering employers were begining to note that it had cost them more dearly in lost production.

It was the AUEW once again that was to feature in the next big confrontation arising out of the decisions of the NIRC; this time in late 1973. In October the Court ordered the union to end a strike at a firm in Woking[2]. Again the union refused to appear before the Court or to call off the strike. This time the NIRC ordered the sequestration of one-hundred thousand pounds of the union's funds[3]. Shortly after, the TUC General Council affirmed its support for the right of workers to strike in demand of union recognition and three days later five-hundred workers

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1. The expenses were for the commissioners charged with retrieving the money. A week later the union withdrew its account from Hill Samuel.

2. The firm was called Con-Mech and the engineers were on strike for union recognition.

3. The money was seized from the Union political fund invested with the Hebburn Urban District Council.

joined the picket line to express solidarity. That same day the AUEW Executive warned that,

" . . . members will recognise the need to preserve the independence and policy of our union and, if called upon . . . will give tangible evidence as to how that support can be effective" (1).

Tangible evidence was soon forthcoming. On the 22nd of October the NIRC ordered that a fine of seventy-five thousand pounds be taken out of the sequestered funds. Outside the Court five hundred strikers demonstrated. The following day the union called on all its district committees to hold meetings to discuss action, and called on all trade unionists to "join in the struggle". Two-hundred thousand engineers went on strike for the day in London[2] on the 5th November, and a further three-hundred thousands were out in other parts of the country. A week later eighty thousand Scottish engineers went on strike. In each case these were one-day strikes.

In the meantime the CIR had published the results of its investigation into the affair and recommended that the company recognise the union. The company refused, and did not face any penalties for doing so. The strike began to wind down and by March of 1974 it was called off; with the remaining strikers finding alternative jobs. The following day the company announced that it was to claim compensation from the AUEW for loss of profits during the strike, plus other expenses[3], totalling £48,871. The NIRC upheld the claim to the extent of £47,000. The familiar battle

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1. Quoted in Labour Research, Vol.62, No.12, Dec.1973, p.263.

2. Called by the London District Committee of the CSEU.

3. The company wanted the AUEW to compensate them for half the cost of holidays in Majorca for "harassed" workers who had worked during the dispute, and £1,000 for a mini-bus hire used to drive the "blacklegs" through the picket line. Plus a further £1,400 for "security staff". Cf. Labour Research, Vol.63, No.5, May 1974.

began. The union refused to appear before the NIRC, was fined for contempt, refused to pay the fine and the award, and the Court moved to seize union assets[1]. On May 3rd Sir John Donaldson ordered the sequestration of all the union's income and financial assets[2]. The Executive Committee responded[3] by sending out instructions to its membership to begin an immediate and indefinate strike. This was the first time in the union's history that it had called an unlimited general strike of its entire membership.

The situation came shortly after the dramatic defeat of the Conservative Government against the NUM; a Labour Government was once again in office. The new Employment Secretary, Michael Foot, urged the union to pay the Court but the union refused. Strikes were already under way. Swiftly there were stoppages throughout the country. Remarkably, in a situation resembling the introduction of the Official Solicitor, the NIRC announced that it had accepted an offer from anonymous donors to pay the £47,000 award plus the £18,000 costs; meekly claiming that,

"It is understood that the payment of the sum by a third party . . . does not involve any surrender by the court of its own authority" (4).

But clearly this was the case. Political action had yet again won through. The NIRC had accepted an "anonymous donation", had forgotten about the contempt of court fine, and its action against the AUEW was its last. On July 25th the NIRC was finally closed down marking the end of a period of eight years in which industrial relations had been altered out of recognition.

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1. The Union were given until April 29th to pay, but the national committee, meeting - defiantly - the day after the deadline, refused to pay on a vote of 41 to 11.

2. Excluding the protected pension fund.

3. The vote was very close. It was carried by 4 votes to 3 after the President, Hugh Scanlon, had cast his vote to break a tie.

4. Quoted in Labour Research, Vol.63, No.6, June 1974, p.136

Workplace Occupations and Political Strikes.

The first workplace occupations occured at a time of increasing government intervention in industrial relations, met with a growing militancy and defiance by large sections of the trade union movement.

When the LCDTU met in 1969 to plan the May Day political strike it included bodies such as the Liverpool Trades Council and the Fisher-Bendix joint shop stewards' committee, both of whom were to play an active role in attempting to build support for the GEC-EE (Liverpool) workers later that year. It also included stewards from Briants' Colour Printing, and the Upper Clyde Shipyards. Both were again involved in the December 8th strike the following year[1], and again in both the two political strikes of March 1971. Less than a month later Briant workers occupied their factory, and three months later the UCS workers began their work-in. Over the next four months five more occupations took place, of which three of the workforces had been involved in the two March '71 political strikes[2]. Fisher-Bendix workers were among the first to occupy their workplace in the spate of occupations which opened the new year. When the Pentonville Five were arrested a number of workers involved in occupations swelled the ranks of those striking in protest - including Briants, Fisher-Bendix, River Don and UCS workers. Many of the engineering strikes, from March 1971 through to June 1974, involved thousands who had also taken part in workplace occupations.

Industrial unrest: In addition to the obviously dramatic political strikes and workplace occupations successive governments of the

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1. In the latter case 5,000 of the workforce came out from the entire Scotstoun and Clydebank yards along with the outfitting trades from the Govan yard.

2. These were Plessey (Alexandria), River Don and Snow Engineering workers.

TABLE 3

OCCUPATION WORKFORCES INVOLVED IN POLITICAL STRIKES, MAY 1969 - MAY 1974.

- MAY DAY 1969 -

| | |
|---|---|
| A.E.I. (Sheffield) | Briant Colour Printing |
| B.L.M.C. (Cowley) | C.A.V. (W.London) |
| Davy United (Sheffield) | Fisher- Bendix |
| Ford (Dagenham) | Hawker-Siddelley (Woodford) |
| Rolls Royce (Coventry) | Shell (Carrington) |
| Snow Engineering | Vauxhall (Ellesmere Port) |

Upper Clyde Shipbuilders

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

- DECEMBER 8th 1970 -

| | |
|---|---|
| Balfour Darwin (Sheffield) | Briants Colour Printing |
| B.L.M.C. (Bathgate) | B.L.M.C. (Light Vans, Birmingham) |
| B.L.M.C. (Cowley) | W.Crosland (Stockport) |
| Cammell Laird (Liverpool) | Davy Manufacturing (Sheffield) |
| Fisher-Bendix | Ford (Dagenham) |
| Hoover (Perrivale)[1] | Hawker-Siddelley (Hatfield) |
| Lucas (Liverpool) | Massey-Ferguson (Coventry) |
| Hawker-Siddelley (Woodford) | Shell (Carrington) |
| U.C.S. | Vauxhall (Ellesmere Port) |

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

- MARCH 1st 1971 -

| | |
|---|---|
| B.L.M.C. (Birmingham) | B.L.M.C. (Cowley) |
| Fisher-Bendix | Ford (Dagenham) |
| Hawker-Siddelley (Chaderton) | Hawker-Siddelley (Woodford) |
| Massey-Ferguson (Coventry) | River Don |
| Snow Engineering | Vauxhall (Ellesmere Port) |
| U.C.S. | Manchester engineering factories[2]. |

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

- MARCH 18th 1971 -

| | |
|---|---|
| Balfour Darwin (Sheffield) | B.L.M.C. (Birmingham) |
| B.L.M.C. (Cowley) | Fisher-Bendix |
| Ford (Dagenham) | Hawker-Siddelley(Chaderton) |
| Hawker-Siddelly (Woodford) | Massey-Ferguson (Coventry) |
| River Don | Snow Engineering |
| Vauxhall (Ellesmere Port) | U.C.S. |

Manchester engineering factories[2].

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

TABLE 1 - CONTINUED

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

- PENTONVILLE FIVE ARRESTS -

| | |
|---|---|
| Briants Colour Printing | Cammell Laird (Liverpool) |
| Caterpillar (Birtley) | Churchill (Manchester)[1] |
| Fisher-Bendix | River Don |
| Scragg (Manchester) | Shell (Carrington) |
| Shell (Ellesmere Port) | U.C.S. |
| Westland Helicopters (Yeovil) | |

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

- THE AUEW v J.GOAD STRIKES -

| | |
|---|---|
| B.L.M.C. (Cowley) | Ford (Dagenham) |
| Engineering factories throughout Britain[3]. | |

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

- THE AUEW v CON-MECH STRIKES -

| | |
|---|---|
| B.A.C. (Weybridge) | B.L.M.C. (Birmingham) |
| B.L.M.C. (Cowley) | B.L.M.C. (Southall) |
| Henry Boot (York) | Cammell Laird (Liverpool) |
| Ford (Dagenham) | GEC-AEI (Manchester) |
| GEC-AEI (Openshaw) | Ferranti (Manchester) |
| Hawker-Siddelley (Chaderton) | Hawker-Siddelley (Brough) |
| Hawker-Siddelley (Kingston) | Hoover (Perivale)[1] |
| Lucas (Wolverhampton) | Shell (Carrington) |
| T.I. (Walsall) | Westinghouse (Chippenham) |
| Westland (Yeovil) | Engineering factories throughout Britain. (3) |

* Compiled from 'Morning Star' reports.

1. In these case a planned occupation had not taken place.

2. During the spring of 1972 over fifty engineering factories in Manchester were occupied. Virtually all of these will have responded to the AUEW executive strike calls. 'The Times' for March 2nd reported that "400,000" engineers were on strike in the "North of England" of which "100,000" were in Yorkshire. This would have encompassed a majority of the Manchester, Liverpool and Yorkshire occupation workforces.

3. During the Goad strikes between half and three-quarters-of-a-million engineers went on strike. About the same number were involved in the Con-Mech strikes. It is reasonable to assume that this would have, in both cases, encompassed a great majority of engineering occupation workforces.

period faced post-war record levels of industrial strikes. Taking one important index of "working days lost due to strikes"[1] the average for each of the twenty years up to 1965 was just under three million days. This rose quite rapidly as the economic crisis began to effect many workers over the next five years; averaging more than five-and-a-half million days per year. In the year of 'In Place of Strife' the figure stood at just under seven million days, making it the second highest year for strikes in the post-war period[2]. An even more dramatic rise was experienced in the period 1971-75 with more than thirteen million days being lost for each of the five years[3].

Significantly companies experiencing workplace occupations were also heavily represented among both the industrial and political strike figures for the same period (see chapter six). At the very least sixty percent of those workforces involved in occupations were also involved in the political strikes of the period (see table one). In addition many of the same bodies (see chapter four and seven) and personalities (see chapter eight) figure largely in all three actions, i.e., industrial, political and occupation strikes.

Summary.

By the mid-1960s Britain began to become gripped by a serious economic

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1. I agree with the points expressed by R.Hyman (1972) regarding the political bias of this Department of Employment term. From here on Hyman's term "striker days" will be substituted.

2. Figures in all cases are calculated from H.Pelling (1969), pp.263-4. These are drawn from official figures which do not include political strikes; only "industrial strikes". The 1969 striker day figure was the second highest since 1929.

3. The highest point was in 1972, with just under 24 million striker days; the 7th highest ever recorded in eighty years of record keeping. The other years included 1974 (10th),and 1971 (11th), making it the highest five year period of industrial unrest since 1926-30.

crisis. This rapidly had a direct impact on the living standards and expectations of working people. The concept of an ever progressing economy and rising living standards gave way to falling wages and high unemployment. To make matters worse Government efforts to control the crisis involved further restrictions on the working class; in the form of legal pay restraints and curbs on trade unionism. High unemployment was coupled with forecasts of economic depression.

The bubble had burst and working people faced an uncertain future. The promise of capitalism had not been realised. Part of the past had included full employment which had allowed the development of shop steward organisation and the growth of trade unionism generally. Now that things were changing the unions stood to face a set back. However, Government attempts to curb trade unionism helped to capitalise on the fear and anger among growing sections and, in the event, contributed to the strengthening of the unions. The campaigns against anti-trade union laws became channels for injustice and anger.

The existance of widespread shopfloor organisation also facilitated the channelling of some anger through the unions with resulting changes towards the left in union leaderships. These shopfloor organisations had been built up primarily in the large, impersonal, corporations and multi-nationals; companies which were fertile ground for shop floor activity, which were better able to cope with the economic crisis, but which were more likely to introduce 'rationalisation' schemes. It was largely from these companies that the militant shopfloor organisations grew, and, because of their economic viability, allowed such organisations to survive. These, by and large, were the shopfloor

organisations that were drawn into the political strikes and were among the first to develop workplace occupations in defence of their working conditions. Not surprisingly these were fertile ground for CPGB influence, and, as table 1 shows, such shopfloor bodies were to some extent willing to except the LCDTU leadership in the various political strikes.

Economic growth had been the breeding ground for shopfloor organisation and general working class expectations of progressive living standards. Economic crisis had been the breeding ground for political and industrial unrest. Government pay restraint and anti-trade union laws had been the detonator of that unrest. To some extent the CPGB acted as the catylist for that unrest, and the existing shopfloor organisations were the instrument they used. Political strikes and workplace occupations were manifestations of the extent to which the situation had been radicalised.

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# CHAPTER 6

## SHOP FLOOR LEADERSHIP AND ORGANISATION.

"The main offensive appears to have been initiated at 'grass roots' level - from shop floor and branch organisation. . . The growing power of the shop steward (and rank and file organisation) had created a political and experiential potential capable and ready to resist erosions of perceived rights and conditions".

### Introduction.

This chapter sets out to examine the role of 'grass roots' trade union organisation in the development of workplace occupations. Basically, the observation that organisation at this level played the key initiating and organisational role is no surprise[1]. It does, however, throw further light on the anatomy of strikes and examines the growing influence of such organisations as the joint shop steward committee, the combine committee and the trades council.

The argument confirms the thesis of people like V.Allen (1966) about the growing influence of shop floor organisation. Certainly by the late 1960s the wealth of shop floor organisations - in particular industries - provided the needed training ground in militant action and organisational skills necessary for involvement in a higher stage of struggle. But here we must examine a new dimension: now we witness the continued growth of shop floor organisation through the worst period of unemployment in several decades[2]. It is argued that the long period of relative "full" employment did indeed allow for the development of

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1. A theme already adequately explored in regard to strikes by V.Allen (1966), H.Beynon (1973), T.Cliff and C.Barker (1967), and T.Cliff (1970).

2. V.Allen (1966) explained how it was that such factors as employment rates ("full" or "low") affected the growth or decline of shop floor organisation.

shop floor organisation and to such an extent that, in part, this gave it the strength to overcome the obvious danger of reversals in the face of economic recession. The essential element would appear to lie in the fact that in the face of incomes policies (which cut much of the ground from under shop floor bargaining), and unemployment shop floor organisations quickly and successfully fought back[1]. In addition much of this militancy began to be reflected in leadership changes at national level: crucially this was the case with the TGWU, the AUEW, and the NUM[2]. But even this is not enough. It is argued later (chapter eight) that the CPGB played an important role in the development of shop floor organisation[3] and, drawing from that strength in return, was able to give key leadership direction in the struggles of the period.

Initiative at the Shop Floor.

The development and spread of the occupation tactic arose, in the overwhelming number of cases, from shop steward initiative. In only two cases does the action appear to have taken place after advice from a full-time union official. At Sealand Hovercraft the AUEW District Secretary

"advised the workers to stay on while a campaign was mounted to force a change in government policy or to save the factory by other means" (4).

At Aberdare Cables the full-time branch secreatry of the General and Municipal workers union (NUGMW),

"advised the workers that the way to answer management was "to go in and squat where you are" ' (5).

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1. Far from strengthening the official leadership relative to the shop floor, rank and file action in many ways steeled the leadership of certain unions - e.g., NUS, NUM - to help defeat incomes policies.
2. This is taken up in chapter seven.
3. This is an element crucially missing from V.Allen's (1966) account.
4. 'The Morning Star', 5th December, 1972.
5. 'The Morning Star', 10th April, 1973.

It is not of course surprising to find that shop stewards[1] have played the leading role in workplace occupations. Since the late 1950s there have been endless researchings, enquiries, debates and even a Royal Commission concerned with the "rise of the shop steward".

The role of the shop steward in industrial negotiation is today as significant as ever. Their impact in the sphere of the occupation tactic confirms that this situation has not subsided since the Donovan Commission gave emphasis to it in 1968. If anything it can be argued that the shop steward role, indeed grass roots organisation generally, has been strengthened.

Over the period 1959-75 the number of shop stewards appears to have grown by one hundred percent; from around 175,000 to 350,000[2]. The ratio of one steward per forty-one TUC affiliated trade unionists has grown to one for every twenty-eight and a half[3]. Certainly, occupation workforces appear to be among those sections which are heavily unionised and which have a large number of shop floor representatives. This implies that that is an important link between militancy and the existance of shopfloor organisation[4].

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1. The term "shop steward" is taken to refer to workplace representatives whose titles vary from industry to industry. Cf. W.E.J.McCarthy, 1966. (The varying role of the shop steward is taken up in Chapter 7 of this work).

2. Estimates vary. Clegg, Killick and Adam,(1961) give a figure of 90,000 for 1959, while the TUC General Council Annual Report (1960) puts it at 200,000. The 1971 figure is a C.I.R. estimate, quoted in Labour Research, Vol.62, No.12, Dec.1973, p.263.

3. The respective ratios of stewards to all employed persons is 1:110 and 1:62.

4. This is modified in Chapter 7.

Case Studies in Shop Floor Leadership.

All of the pioneering occupations were initiated at shop floor level. The UCS is the classic case of this[1]. By and large, the role of the trade union official has been to lend support and advice after the occupation had been decided upon. In one or two cases, however, action was initiated due to discussions between stewards and officials[2], but in a couple of cases officials have been obstructive[3] or even completely opposed to an occupation.

Sexton and Sons: Union opposition was evident during the occupation at the small leather wear factory of Sexton and Sons. Set in the Norfolk town of Fakenham the firm employed forty-five women manufacturing shoes and leather articles[4]. By March of 1972 the company was in financial trouble and announced the closure of the factory[5]. A section of the workforce responded by occupying the factory.

From the begining the occupation suffered from a number of weaknesses: it consisted of a small workforce and the majority of them did not become involved but found other work instead. The great majority were organised into a highly conservative union - the National Union of Footwear, Leather and Allied Trades (NUFLAT). What is more the factory was situated in a small market town with barely a working population to draw upon for solidarity or militant roots. Yet an occupation was embarked

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1. The UCS case is explored more fully in chapters 5, 7, and 8.

2. This was the case at Metal Box, Manchester and at Coles Cranes in Sunderland.

3. This was the case at Briants Colour Printing. The unions involved, however, gave a very different face to the public. (Interview with Bill Freeman, 1975).

4. The firm owned other factories in Norwich and at Beccles; in 1971 they were the second largest employer in footwear in Norwich.

5. At the end of the previous year their bankers - Dawney Day - informed them that no more funds would be available. 'The Morning Star',27 Apr.'72.

upon.

The fact of the occupation appears to be owed to a number of features. The influence and publicity of the UCS work-in was an important contributory factor. The first people turned to for assistance were the UCS shop stewards.

"We had heard of the Clydeside workers (and) contacted them for support. We received advice and assistance from Jimmy Reid in Glasgow who sent someone down with a cheque for £250" (1).

The main strength seems to have come from the presence of Nancy McGrath who gave leadership to the women. Significantly she was the only worker organised into the more militant ASTMS. McGrath was a determined person with some experience of trade union militancy: she had once led a group of Irish workers on strike at a canning factory where their wages were lower than those of the English workers[2].

The occupation began with very little idea of direction. As Nancy McGrath put it,

"Our aim was to preserve our own skills in leatherwork until some ideas of saving the factory had been explored" (3).

Coupled with this weakness the workers faced opposition from NUFLAT. The Union's General Secretary wrote to inform them that,

" . . . the General Executive Council came to the decision that the Union cannot officially condone the 'sit-in' " (4).

The Union also refused to give any tacit support in the form of strike pay;

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1. Nancy McGrath (questionnaire, 1975)
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. 'The Guardian', 15th June 1972.

it would only pay 'out-of-work' benefit. At the local level the union official displayed both hostility and chauvinism when he told the workers, "go home and don't be silly girls".

It is possible that given such a situation the occupation might have folded early but for the support of other workers. In addition to the UCS the Fisher-Bendix workers also sent "a large donation"[1]. Local support came from the Norwich trades council and the local branch of ASTMS. A number of workers from local factories provided assistance in machinery maintenance and moving, transportation of goods from the factory to local markets, and in designing patterns for leatherwear. Women's liberation and socialist groups also lent support.

In many ways the Fakenham workers could have been neglected by the trade union movement, but possibly due to the uniqueness of their situation, involving as it did so many weaknesses to overcome, they received substantial publicity[2]. Without shop floor leadership they would never have got off the ground, and probably without outside shop floor and grass roots support they would not have survived. As it is they held on long enough to develop the idea of a work-in and then a pioneering workers' co-operative[3]. In turn they were able to inspire and give assistance to others[4].

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1. 'The Morning Star', 18th July 1972

2. The fact that the occupation tactic had reached out to workers in such an organisationally and historically weak situation may have heartened those who wished to see the tactic develop; seeing in the Fakenham workers a sign that the tactic had developed to a new point beyond the well organised workers.

3. Discussed in chapter nine.

4. Their co-operative raised the idea in the minds of other workforces who themselves went on to develop their own. In direct assistance the Fakenham workers advised the occupation at Gainsbrough Cornford, Great Yarmouth in September 1972.

The Propytex work-in: The situation facing the workers of the Propytex factory in Hartlepool also contained a large number of weaknesses, although here official union backing was eventually forthcoming. The area, although fairly industrial, was not noted for trade union militancy[1]. The factory itself was relatively new and had not been open more than two years, thus the workforce had not had much time to get unionised. Most of the shop stewards at the factory were inexperienced and many of the workforce had not been involved in any industrial action previously. The town M.P. (Ted Leadbitter), although Labour, was apparently embarrassed and hostile initially to any idea of a workplace occupation[2].

Once again strength and inspiration was found among their own ranks, this time in the shape of Roy Kyte-Powell. Kyte-Powell was a very diverse young man capable of welding a fairly weak and unsure workforce into a fighting force. His leadership qualities were drawn from two contradictory strands. He had originally been a sergeant in the British Army and in this position had been sent to Vietnam to help train American troops. On leaving the army he became a member of the Special Air Services (SAS) section of the Territorial Army. However, his experiences in Vietnam led him to a deep reappraisal of his life which led him to join the Communist Party. By the time he came to work at Propytex he was a CPGB member of two years standing and had organised a strike at his previous employ[3].

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1. The town's biggest employer at this time was British Steel but the works was under threat of closure. As a result the union members involved set up an "action committee" to fight the closure. However, this body was the least militant of any of the many action committees in steel works and it refused to be affiliated with the militant national action committee. The idea of an occupation or even a strike was far to the back of the action committee's thinking. (Interview with action committee members, 1974).
2. This is the claim of R.Kyte-Powell (interview, 1975).
3. For 6 weeks he worked for G.E.C. and was on strike for $4\frac{1}{2}$ of those weeks.

Leadership alone was of course not enough to encourage a number of the workforce into dramatic action. A major factor seems to have been the attitude of the company. The company had moved to the North East on the strength of a Government Regional Aid grant. Rightly or wrongly when the company suddenly announced its closure after only a short period of operations many workers doubted their integrity[1]. According to Kyte-Powell the company announced the closure, while the workers were on their annual holidays, despite having orders worth a quarter-of-a-million pounds on the books. This fact helped to anger and dismay the workforce who were now willing to follow the advice of their shop stewards and occupy the factory.

The decision to occupy was put forward by Roy Kyte-Powell, acting both out of conviction and under the influence of the UCS work-in. Right from the begining the shop stewards "got a book on the UCS struggle to find out how things were done there"[2]. Kyte-Powell shortly after went to Clydeside to get more direct information.

As with various other occupations the near spontaneity of the action meant that the aims were ill defined. In this case the leadership felt that there were two possibilities, i) to win time to find a new owner, or ii) to fight to win government backing for the idea of a workers' co-operative. The latter idea was chosen under the impact of the current government decision to support worker co-operatives at Glasgow, Meriden, and Liverpool[3]. Once this direction was chosen Kyte-Powell was sent to

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1. Kyte-Powell strongly suspected double dealing behind the scenes but did not feel sure enough to publish the evidence.

2. Interview with R.Kyte-Powell, 1975. It was he who inspired the idea of the TUSIU booklet on 'Worker Occupations and the North East Experience", 1976, and a hand-book 'guide to occupations' currently in progress.

3. These worker co-operatives are examined in chapter 9.

Liverpool to meet with the leaders of the K.M.E. workers' co-operative.

"In the seventeenth week (of our occupation) we met with Jack Spriggs . . . We asked a few questions regarding the legality of the company structure; how the workers could protect the workers' rights on a managerial board" (1).

By now the occupation was in real trouble and government aid for a planned worker co-operative was not forthcoming[2]. Nonetheless, the workforce waged a fierce campaign stretching over five months. It was to be one of the longest struggles waged in the North East for some time.

Throughout the period the entire initiative lay with the shop floor leadership which had to overcome many difficulties. To begin with, they decided, given the existance of a large export order, to run as a work-in. This presented a first major obstacle as the Electricity Board had cut off the supply. Kyte-Powell quickly remedied the situation by arranging for the hire of an emergency generator. This then presented a financial problem - the generator was costing one-hundred-and-sixty-pounds per week to hire. The shop floor then appealed to trade union organisations for funds to help them get going. A major way of doing this was to win the workforce to agree to send a regular report to the 'Morning Star'. Usually such reports were read by an important section of the trade union lay leadership that would be likely to support such actions as occupations.

"There were six articles in the (Morning) 'Star'. I used to read out what the 'Star' wrote and they (the workforce) would say that it was word for word. I would then request endorsement from the floor to submit the following articles to the 'Star'. At first they thought that it would be twisted by the 'Star' but they would be amazed when I read out what had been written" (3)

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1. Interview with R.Kyte-Powell, 1975. The Kirkby Manufacturing and Engineering Company was the name given to the co-operative by the workers. It was formerly Fisher-Bendix and then International Property Development (IPD).

2. See Chapter 9.

3. R.Kyte-Powell interview, 1975.

In addition the work-in leaders used the local and national press when ever possible[1]. Using union and communist party contacts the work-in leadership also wrote to and visited many organisations throughout Britain. So active was the campaign that the strain often told on family life. Roy Kyte-Powell's wife (Angie) found it,

"a bit much during the work-in, with me going out at seven in the morning and not getting back until eight at night. I'd be away in London, Glasgow, or Liverpool sometimes, and I'd be out every night of the week after nine at night doing local meetings" (2).

The activity paid off. Support and finance came in from many sources. Transport and General Workers' branches throughout the country sent in over eight thousand pounds, and Transport House[3] sent a further three thousand. Branches of the AUEW sent in two thousand pounds, and money came in from a further seven hundred trade union branches of different unions along with sixteen trades councils. Branches of the local communist party in the North East region sent in over five hundred pounds. The local ratepayers association gave them eight hundred pounds for the generator and every club and pub in the town had a raffle[4]. The Action Committee at Hartlepool Steel works sent in twenty pounds, and local schools and organisations held sponsored swims and raffles. Even a local solicitor gave his services free and the Industrial Society gave a series of free lectures to the Propytex workers on business organisation. In short, the Propytex workforce leadership managed to make their tiny struggle into

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1. The press did not usually give them a good write up. "We were slated by 'The Times' and 'The Daily Mirror', and the 'Sun' blasted us in one editorial". The local Hartlepool paper, however, did give good coverage. (R.Kyte-Powell, interview 1975)

2. Ibid.

3. Headquarters of the TGWU in London.

4. The Conservative Club was the exception.

one supported by a sizeable section of the local community.

If finanical support was achieved at the expence of family life some effort was made to overcome the problem.

"The strain was telling with all the wives so a 'families' day' was held. A couple of buses were hired. We got all the machinery in working order at the factory. We got all the wives there with the children and arranged for time off the school for them. We also held an open day for the public with local council members, tradespeople and school children. We arranged for local schools to send parties to look around. All this was keeping the workers occupied and giving them a sense of pride" (1).

Thus, in a fairly simple operation the shop stewards managed to help alleviate some of the family difficulties, built on local support and encouraged an increased sense of purpose among the workforce.

Finally, the work-in was fairly remarkable for winning support from local management at the factory.

"Once they realised that the union had assumed leadership and that it was a controlled leadership, and they realised that it wasn't just a rabble; once they saw it was a responsible leadership; the management - a week after the work-in started - came and said they would like to join in. They stuck it out for eight weeks. After (that) they found that they were getting 'blacked' (by local companies) so left . . . but still came for several weeks after and paid subs to the fighting fund"(2).

For five months a group of workers fought a campaign which gave them a place in the minds and decisions of trade union organisations throughout the country. The occupation and the support it achieved was almost entirely due to the local shop floor leadership under the convenorship of Roy Kyte-Powell.

The Mass Occupations in Manchester: In the Manchester area engineering workers in 1972 had one of the most astute and experienced set of union organisers in the country. These officials were to lend their

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1. R.Kyte-Powell interview, 1975.

2. Ibid.

full support during the various occupations that occured during the spring of that year. It was the various shop stewards in the different factories, however, that were to initiate the tactic.

The background. Late in 1971 the executive of the CSEU agreed a policy of pursuing a national claim through district level negotiations[1]. The CSEU had presented the EEF with a basic package of demands[2] and when this was rejected "out of hand" it was decided that the claim should be fought out on a district by district basis. The CSEU were banking on the view that within certain areas some large companies would give in to local pressure and in so doing would weaken the collective stand of the EEF. The more a regional federation of the EEF could be weakened the more likely it would be for the CSEU to make inroads in other regions.

The strategy had definate problems[3] which, had it not been for the mass occupations and skillful local leadership, could have seriously weakened the unions involved.

At first there was some hesitancy in the CSEU districts and it was not until March of 1972 that any of the districts began to take any determined action.

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1. The fifty-year old 'York Memorandum' was due for renewal that year. The agreement determined a number of negotiating procedures and was forced upon the unions at a point of weakness. In the absence of a new agreement the CSEU decided on a strategy of undermining the parts that constituted the employers' national body.

2. This included a claim for a £6 per week wage increase, reduction of the working week to 35 hours, equal pay for women, and 2 extra days holiday a year. The reduction in hours and extra holiday days was part of a deliberate strategy of attack on rising unemployment levels.

3. The unions had "to ensure that the firm in which (they were) weakest did not set the line for the whole district, and hence for the national scene. (They were) especially uncomfortable . . . where they confronted subsidiaries of national companies. The complications in dealing with these firms at district level are exemplified by . . . GEC/AEI, the largest firm in the Manchester area. . . (who) have . . . a national industrial relations policy, and are certainly not prepared to make their Trafford Park subsidiary the trendsetter".

   A.Teulings, 1972.

The first into action was the Manchester district, with the greatest concentration of engineering establishments anywhere in Britain[1]. The district leadership of the CSEU decided in early March to pursue a district-wide campaign rather than a plant by plant attack as had been suggested at national CSEU level. This view was carried with only a handfull against at an over one-thousand strong district shop steward meeting on the 14th[2]. At that meeting it was decided to introduce an overtime ban, a ban on piecework, and a work-to-rule, but not (despite protests) until the 27th of the month.

Despite the decision to wait for a fortnight several factories in the Stockport area began the action immediately. At one - G.K.N. James Mill Steelworks (Bredbury) - the management responded by suspending the entire workforce and moved to lock them out. The workers took immediate action and secured the factory: the wave of occupations had begun. Many Stockport shop stewards had moved into action early because many employers in the area were taking advantage of the time to move large numbers of stock in preparation for the industrial dispute. At the James Mill plant three-hundred-and-sixty tons a day was being moved instead of the usual sixty[3]. It was this kind of action which had prompted the Stockport area engineering shop stewards committee to call for earlier action: workers at twelve factories responded.

By the 20th of March a key victory was being announced on Merseyside; the Fisher-Bendix occupation had achieved its aims and, "the lesson was not lost on the Manchester engineers"[4].

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1. The district has 250 members of the Manchester EEF, and 300 non-federated firms, plus hundreds of other enterprises which are affected by agreements between the CSEU and the EEF. In all a total of 1,000 firms employing over 200,000.
2. Several voices were raised at the meeting accusing the national leadership of abdication on the claim. Cf. G.Chadwick, 1973.
3. Ibid.
4. J.Arnison, 'The Morning Star' 14th April 1972.

The district leadership of the AUEW gave ready support to the James Mill workers and warned that attempted lock-outs would be met by occupations where ever possible. Shortly after the union's national executive committee gave official backing to the James Mill occupation and empowered the district committees to back similar actions where appropriate. In the following weeks a number of other occupations occurred; some to avoid lock-out, some in solidarity with locked-out workers, but others as offensive tactics in themselves.

Within a few weeks fifty-five occupations had either occurred or were still in progress. In almost every case shop stewards, at both district and factory level, played a significant role in the development. Prior to the James Mill occupation, at the district meeting of stewards, the idea of using the occupation tactic was raised from the floor[1].

Chadwick (1973), and to some extent Teulings (1972), in supporting the claim about the key role of the stewards in these occupations give an erroneous impression about the part played by the local officials. Teulings suggests a divide in approach between stewards and officials,

> "The policy of decentralisation required negotiation at plant level. But plant negotiations had always been the role of the shop stewards, not the district officials. . . (The) shop stewards are used to handling grievances and negotiating all kinds of job control issues, but not wages. On this point district officials do have the knowledge and expertise. So the policy of decentralisation required from both groups a close understanding of their roles and tasks, for probably neither of them could handle the case separately. One cannot see that together . . . the tools were provided to make this process work effectively or smoothly" (2)

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1. The idea was not formally adopted by the meeting but furthered the idea among engineering stewards.

2. p.3.

In a similar vein Chadwick blames bureaucratic tendencies. For example, he complains that,

"when the employers at one factory retaliated through suspensions or direct lock-out it was up to the men at that particular plant to work out for themselves their own tactics (due to trade union officials who were) hamstrung by their situation and their traditional modus operandi" (1).

In both cases we gain a one-sided impression of shop floor initiative. It is pointed out in a later chapter (seven) that the AUEW district committee structure consists largely of lay officers, directly in touch with the grass roots situation. Hence the divide between district leadership and the rank and file leadership may, in a number of instances, be nominal. Certainly in the Manchester area the district committees (and the national committee) responded quickly and supportively to the spread of the occupation tactic. If anything there is evidence that radical officials would liked to have seen an even greater development of occupations but were "hamstrung" by the uneven development of the struggle before them[2]. On the other hand, there is little evidence to show that officials worked to prevent occupations developing. In two cases, for instance, factories were occupied after receiving advice from their AUEW district secretary. At Laurence Scott the six-hundred workers began their occupation(under a threat of suspension by the employer) and only three hours after being addressed by district secreatry Bernard Panter. At Metal Box, Timperly,

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1. p.118.

2. While a majority of workers in the area supported the overtime ban only a minority (5%) became involved in occupations. A few years later many engineers voted-in a right-wing leadership throughout the districts. It is reasonable to speculate that many of these in 1972 would not have favoured more militant action. The problem with the 'rank and filist' arguement is that is tends to imply a dichotomy of neo-revolutionary shop stewards and bureaucratic officials; in many cases the characteristics are reversed.

Panter is said to have discussed the management's threat of suspension with the shop stewards - "all youngsters and obviously inexperienced". He was apparently hesitant about suggesting takeover action, wondering whether they had the capacity to carry out the operation, but when he tentatively put the idea forward he was told,

"Oh, we are ready for that. We just wondered if the union would back us".

Panter gave the go ahead[1]. In this case the shop stewards were keen to take militant action but could have been dissuaded by a union official. This did not occur because the official responsible was also anxious to see the occupation strategy develop. Thus, it must be seen that a flexible approach was adopted to the situation which should in no way be equated with bureaucratic, hide bound thinking.

The spread of the tactic in these cases owes its development to a combination of shop floor and complimentary features. Shop floor representatives took the initiative both at individual workplaces and in raising the idea at district-wide meetings. These actions were speedily supported due to the unique structure of the AUEW district committees which directly involves shop floor leadership[2]. The Engineering Union is one of the few which both allows for a strong reflection of shop floor opinion and by that token has been able to respond readily, and supportively, to militant action. In short, even official action in the development of the Manchester sit-ins was itself a more-or-less direct result of shop floor leadership.

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1. J.Arnison, 1972.

2. See chapter seven.

Rank-and-File Organisation.

Already by the late 1950s the role of the shop steward was being recognised as being significant in industrial relations. As the number of shop stewards grew so there developed ever more complex forms of shop floor organisation. So much so was this the case that the TUC General Council began to show concern. The General Council was to state, at the 1960 TUC Annual Conference, that,

"each union could allocate a sphere of responsibility for its own stewards but no union individually is in a position to bring within its rules the joint committee of stewards from several unions or the officers of such bodies".

The General Council went on to identify three types of "joint bodies". It was favourable to "joint committee(s) of stewards from several unions in one place of work" but in so far as they "encouraged joint working between unions". It condemned the situation which was arising where stewards set aside the decisions or programme of their own union and,

"follow another path through a joint shop stewards' committee on the excuse that this other path is 'official' or acceptable to one or other of the other unions" (1).

This type of joint committee was,

"the most longstanding and the most numerous . . . (with) instances of joint activities between stewards of different unions . . . in some industries, almost as widespread as workshop representation itself".

This posed something of a problem, as the General Council saw it, to the official structure of the trade unions and the General Council itself.

The second type of organisation was those which,

"link(ed) a number of joint committees either from several factories under the same ownership (e.g. B.M.C.) or throughout an industry (e.g. electricity generating)".

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1. TUC Annual Report, 1960, pp.129-30.

This type of organisation was strongly condemned by the General Council:

"Whatever the motive of those primarily responsible for (this) type the effect is often a challenge to established arrangements" (1).

The General Council had no such doubts about the motives of those involved in a third type of organisation which consists of,

"Attempts to form a national centre or to call national conferences of stewards irrespective of the industry in which they work (e.g. the abortive conference in December 1959 convened in the name of the Firth Brown stewards, or the organisation which goes under the name of the Engineering and Allied Trades Shop Stewards National Council)" (2).

For the General Council,

"The aim of the sponsers of this . . . type is to usurp the policy-making functions of unions or federations of unions".

It was advised that,

"Unions (should) inform their members that participation in such bodies is contrary to the obligations of union membership".

And that, member unions should

"be more vigilant, and if, after a warning, a steward repeats actions which are contrary to the rules or agreements, his credentials should be withdrawn" (3).

The Annual Congress delegates went on, by majority vote, to agree the General Council report and despite the fact that bad managerial practices were blamed as being responsible for over ninety percent of industrial disputes under review.

The TUC Congress was then meeting at a time when concern over shop floor organisation was coming from several quarters, including Government and Employers' associations. However, the growth of such

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1. TUC Annual Report, 1960, p.129.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

organisations was in response to a number of features which were not easily tackled. As shop floor militancy grew it was not readily being reflected in the decisions and leadership of the trade unions and certainly not at the level of the TUC General Council. In the political sphere 'condensus' politics was reaching its apex[1]. Thus faced with periods of economic recession and Government attacks on incomes many trade unionists found that they had to fall back on their own resources if any offensive was to be made[2]. The action of the General Council and the Labour Government towards the National Union of Seamen's strike in 1966 helped to activate the new Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions. This organisation - of the third type - achieved industrial influence unmatched by any other such body since the Minority Movements of the 1920s[3]. At an organisational level the mid-1960s saw a rapid acceleration in the growth of giant companies, of mergers and of 'rationalisations'. In turn these accelerated the growing problem of closures and redundancies[4]. More and more organisational growth and size has proven a contributory factor to the growing need among trade unionists to establish more meaningful (local) centres of union decision making[5]; one the one hand, there

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1. Cf. Gollan, 1975.

2. Cf. Cliff and Barker, 1967.

3. In the early 1920s the CPGB attempted to create a number of rank-and-file power bases within a number of unions; linking up and co-ordinating each on a national basis. These bases were called Minority Movements.

4. See chapter 5.

5. The question of organisational size is arguably sociologically meaningful in regard to the growth of unrest among organisational personnel, i.e., the unionisation of white-collar employees (Lockwood, 1958). But size alone is not the key factor (Bain, 1970; Hughes, 1973). Members can feel a sense of power in a large organisation (see chapter 7). It is where size is added to a distancing of decision making (Lockwood, 1958) where the individual is atomised in their relationship to the organisation (Goldthorpe et al, 1968), and where organisational dissatisfaction is evidenced that size becomes an important dimension.

been a rapid growth in the size of trade unions[1] and on the other hand, an even greater growth in industrial enterprises.[2] Increasingly the British trade unionist has found himself employed within a company where decisions are taken at centres outside the particular workplace (and often outside of the country). He has found his work deskilled, made redundant or transferred to other sections of the giant company. At the same time he has witnessed a growth in his trade union organisation which has not structurally matched the kind of growth and developments within industry[3]. In many cases this has meant that union decision making has become remote from the requirements of each particular shop floor situation. An important response has been in the direction of shop floor organisation which has matched the structural needs of the employment situation. Organisations such as 'combine committees' of shop stewards have helped to cut across a situation which hindered negotiation, i.e., cut across multi-unionism with all its peculiar facets in the face of a multitude of different negotiation procedures, pay agreements and conditions. The combine committees have met a need which official union structures have found it difficult to meet. Ironically, official attempts to establish combines of stewards from a particular union, or have "industrial conferences" for the same purpose, could well have created a new level of disunity.

> "(For) if such "combines" or "industrial" conferences operate only within the confines of a particular union, there may be co-ordination of policy for that union at the expense of the working unity of stewards from different unions" (4).

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1. Over 1955-1975 the number of TUC affiliated unions fell from 183 to 111 while membership grew from 8.1 millions to 10.3. In 1955 there were 11 unions with over 100,000 members and representing over 43% of all TUC membership; the respective 1975 figures was 19 unions with 71%.

2. In 1961 the 28 largest companies in manufacturing accounted for 30% of all manufacturing net assets, and 39% of the net assets of companies with assets exceeding £½ million. The respective 1968 figures was 40% and 50%. J.Hughes, 1970, p.62.

3. Cf. Hughes, 1970.

4. Ibid, p.67.

Thus, in the face of serious industrial changes British trade unions had not adequately changed to meet new structural demands. In fact when government, in the mid-1960s, was encouraging industrial mergers the TUC General Council only met the challenge to the extent of encouraging union mergers: mergers which were ill-conceived and hidebound by the traditional structures and rivalries of existing trade unions[1]. In the event the growing need was partially met by the growth of shop floor organisation.

Organisation of the First Type: The Joint Shop Stewards' Committee.

The joint shop stewards' committee is as widespread today as the TUC General Council had anticipated in 1960. Not unexpectedly the indications are that occupation workforces have been among the well organised in terms of these committees.

Although evidence is incomplete on a large number of cases table two indicates that, at the least, fifty-four workplaces had a joint shop steward committee. Excluding the majority of the 1972 Manchester pay battle occupations[2] this makes a percentage of around thirty-four of the total remaining (159) cases. A further twenty cases involved two or more unions but where no specific mention is made of any committee. It is likely, however, that such a committee would have existed in the majority of these. Thus, a minimum of forty-seven percent of worker occupations is likely to have had a joint shop stewards' committee, and - excluding cases where this is unlikely due to size of workforce[3] - possibly as high as seventy-six percent.

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1. The merger of the Plumbers and the Electricians (late 1960s) resolved some difficulties, e.g. in construction work, but strengthened union rivalry elsewhere, e.g. engineering industry. This is true of several other mergers of the period.
2. Although the CSEU (which initiated the battle) involves many unions only one is reported as being involved in a number of cases. This is unlikely.
3. Excluding 50 cases where the total workforce consisted of 100 or less.

## TABLE 4

OCCUPIED FACTORIES KNOWN TO HAVE A JOINT SHOP STEWARD ORGANISATION.

| Workplace | Workplace | Workplace |
|---|---|---|
| Allis Chalmers | Hawker-Siddelley (Woodford) | Personna |
| Balfour Darwin | Hawker-Siddelley (Hatfield) | Propytex |
| Bason | Hawker-Siddelley (Chaderton) | Plessey(Swindon) |
| Briants Colour Printing | Honeywell | Plessey(Notts) |
| B.L.M.C. (Cowley) | Imperial Typewriter | R.H.P.[a] |
| B.L.M.C. (Hants) | I.T.T. (McLaren) | Rolls Royce |
| B.P. Chemicals | Leadgate Engineering | L.Scott |
| B.S.C. (River Don) | Lucas (Liverpool) | S.D.N.[b] |
| Bryants (Birmignham) | Lucas (CAV, W.London) | Smith-Hutton |
| Brooke Cylinders | Perkins | Snow Engineering |
| Cammell Laird | Massey-Ferguson | Strachans |
| Coles Cranes (Sunderland) | Masson Scott Thrissell | Tillotson |
| Courtaulds | McNeil | Todd and Sons |
| Crossfield | N.V.T. (Wolverhampton) | Tress |
| Fisher-Bendix | N.V.T. (Hants) | T.I.(Wallsall) |
| Ford (Dagenham) | Triumph Meriden | U.C.S. |
| Gainsbrough Cornford | Plessey (Alexandria) | Vauxhall |
| Hawker-Siddelley (Bolton) | Plessey (Uxbridge) | Warmsley |

*Table compiled from newspaper reports ('The Morning Star' and 'Socialist Worker'), Labour Research, interviews and questionnaire returns. Only known cases are included and should not indicate a lack of such committees in other enterprises. The table represents approximately 26% of all cases.

a. Ransome, Hoffman and Pollard.

b. The Scottish Daily News.

In all but nine of the cases refered to in the table the workplaces involved were part of a large, multi-workplace, company. In virtually every case the pre-existance of a joint shop steward committee was an important contributory factor to the success of an occupation; and to its initiation.

Organisation of the Second Type: Combine Committee of Shop Stewards.

Shop floor organisation across a company or an industry was condemned by the TUC General Council. Such organisations have, however, continued to develop and have played an important role in aiding a sizeable number of worker occupations.

A recent study has indicated that even yet,

"In far too many combines, combine committees do not exist or at best are just talking shops" (1).

In some cases there have been signs of "workers' solidarity in a combine" but representing "an exaggerated picture of combine committee action"[2]. This view applies equally well to workforces in companies experiencing occupations but, given the limited development of such organisation or solidarity, the indications are that occupation workforces are among the best organised. For instance, of those companies experiencing occupations[3] roughly seventy-two percent employed workers in more than one establishment and some thirty percent of these[4] involved some form of combine committee or inner-company solidarity[5]. These companies experienced over forty percent of all the occupations within the period.

Case Studies in Inner-Company Solidarity and Organisation.

The existance of some form of across company organisation has been an

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1. E.Johnston, 1975, chapter 8

2. Ibid.

3. See chapter 6. There were 136 companies to experience occupations; of which 98 owned more than one enterprise.

4. This is likely a minimum figure. I have only included cases where organisation and/or solidarity is reported. In many cases no indication is given and cannot be definately taken to mean that no support was received etc.

5. Thirty involved one or the other and of these at least seventeen are known to have combine committees or cross company organisation of some kind.

important factor in the development of several occupations. In some cases it has served to strengthen the morale, finances, and bargaining position of workers in occupation. In other cases it has helped to spread the tactic throughout a company. In one or two cases the onset of an occupation has helped to reactivate or even establish a combine committee[1].

The Upper Clyde Shipbuilders: It is difficult to deal with the strengths of the UCS "Co-ordinating Committee" without stressing the importance of the individual shop stewards whose energies and talents helped to create that committee. Once formed, however, the committee was a vital element of the eventual victory that was won on the Clyde. At each of four yards strong shop floor organisation existed, but that wasn't enough. A unity of all four yards was needed to fight a successful campaign. This was especially necessary as redundancies and closure was not to be spread evenly; two yards were to be closed completely and two were to remain open but with a reduced workforce.

Unity was not an easy matter. There was a host of disparate trades and unions to deal with[2]. There was a further basis of disunity in the nature of the uneven closure/redundancy plan. And there was the age old history of shipyard union demarcation. Nonetheless, the efforts of various shop floor leaders helped to create a situation where all but one of the main unions involved across the four yards agreed to resolve their differences within the yards without recourse to district or national union discussions. Previous solidarity between the yards both helped to bring this agreement about and undermine any potential sectarianism in

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1. The Fisher-Bendix occupation led to the creation of a combine committee within the Thorn group. The Coles Cranes (Sunderland) occupation also helped to activate a combine committee within the Acrow group.

2. There were at least 15 main unions represented within the yards.

those yards not facing closure. In one of them - the Fairfield's yard - solidarity from the other yards had helped a workers' struggle there to fend off redundancies in the mid-1960s. Importantly unity among UCS workers had been tried out prior to the work-in. On four occassions UCS workers had struck on the occasion of a political strike against anti-trade union legislation plans[1].

The role of the Co-ordinating Committee has been summed up by Thompson and Hart (1972),

"This unity provided the base for the fortress which UCS became, operating through the well-built organisational structure which furnished the framework within which the work-in was conducted - the Co-ordinating Committee, the mass meetings, the sub-committees, the publicity and the campaigns. In it was distilled the organising experience and the administration lessons learned through their trade union affairs by generations of shipyard workers. Decisive leadership on the one hand, mass democracy on the other, is perhaps the formula which sums it up best"(2).

In pushing the work-in forward the Co-ordinating Committee were,

"concerned with . . . achieving the objectives of the work-in and . . . were prepared to set aside any particular tactic or subordinate demand if doing so furthered the essential aim" (3).

The role of the Committee was thus vital not only in developing unity but in sustaining the fight of the workforce through fifteen difficult months.

"The major campaign was to convince people - including many UCS workers - the propaganda that shipbuilding was finished was false. (But) here we had a leadership which planned not a local but a national campaign. Press, television and radio were used to further it. Almost on a rota system members of the committee stomped all parts of the country addressing meetings and meeting officials in other industries . . . Their power became such that even the Liquidator was finally forced to officially negotiate with them. The amount of homework the lads did about the shipbuilding industry was remarkable. Tory Government ministers were verbally slaughtered by facts when they dared visit Clydeside. Eventually they stayed clear of the area. . .

The crunch came when other industries united in mass action in support of UCS. Even at this stage it was always the co-ordinating committee which offered the proposals and made the running. No doubt this is why they succeeded. Even when the road ahead was not always clear they still impressed that they knew exactly where they were going" (4).

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1. See chapter 3, table 1.
2. pp.92-93.
3. Ibid.
4. Letter from A.Milligan - former 'Morning Star' Scottish reporter, May 1975.

As is now well known the UCS work-in ended with the saving of all four yards and a great many of the jobs under threat. Clearly, given the geographical, historical, and diffuse difficulties faced in uniting four shipyards and nearly ten thousand workers a combine committee was essential. In the event a committee did come into being and must take much of the credit for the incredible organisational role performed in the entire course of the struggle. Organisationally the Co-ordinating Committee was the lynch pin of the UCS success story.

Plessey: There is evidence of assistance from a combine committee right from the first occupation within the company in September 1971. The combine was to have a varying effect throughout the total of six company occupations up to the end of 1975.

The combine committee was certainly holding regular meetings in the latter part of 1971 and was attended by stewards from the occupied Alexandria factory. At a meeting in early October that year it was unanimously agreed to back the Alexandria occupation[1]. In this case the combine committee's support was not the crucial factor which sustained the occupation struggle but it was an important supportive factor. The local shop floor leadership take full credit for much of the occupation's strength. As the local convenor told a conference in January of 1972,

"We decided that we had had enough of redundancy. I had been on the dole before and always with my head down. This time we were going to fight and if we lost at least we could go out with our heads held high"(2).

They did not lose. Here was a group of workers "not militant in any way" but to the forefront of those resisting redundancies and "together working and organising in a way that . . . surprised" even them[3].

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1. 'The Morning Star', 13th October 1971.
2. The conference, held in Newcastle, was organised by the Institute for Workers' Control.
3. Works' convenor, Eddie McLafferty, quoted in 'The Morning Star', 10th Oct.71

The next occupation within Plessey's occurred at the Swindon (Garrard) factory. This was concerned with holiday arrangements. There is some indication that the decision to occupy was influenced by the Swindon workers' involvement in supportive action for the Alexandria occupation.

The following month (June 1972) an occupation took place at the Upminster factory amidst widespread industrial action at the company's five factories in the area. All five were protesting against threatened redundancies; four went on strike and the fifth staged an occupation. The nature of the struggle ensured that there was inter-action between work-forces involved.

The fourth occupation - over a pay issue - took place at the Beeston plant. A section of the workforce occupied the plant and were supported by the rest of the workforce who staged a one-day sympathy strike. That was in January 1973. Eighteen months later the Beeston plant was the site of the fifth occupation, and again over pay. This time the action was part of a national campaign within the company, with strikes occurring at many of the other factories. Support for the Beeston workers came from striking workers at Plessey Sunderland, Liverpool, Swindon, South Shields, and Ilford[1]. In this same period ten thousand Plessey workers - including those at Liverpool - went on strike and lobbied Parliament to protest against threatened redundancies. The action was co-ordinated by the combine committee which embraced "all manual workers and most staff sections"[2].

The final occupation of the period occurred at the end of 1974 with action at the Swindon Interconnect factory against redundancies.

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1. 'The Morning Star', 18th June 1974. Swindon workers had, ofcourse, already supported Alexandria workers and had staged their own occupation. The Ilford workers had been involved with the Upminster occupation; the latter were transferred to Ilford when the factory was closed.
2. 'The Morning Star', 12th June 1974.

These workers already had some association with the other Swindon occupation and had supported the Beeston occupation earlier that year. Interestingly they produced a bulletin appealing for solidarity from other sections of the company workforce; this was distributed throughout the company. Support was forthcoming and included assistance from Beeston to where the company was attempting to transfer the Swindon work.

Overall there is evidence that there was an active combine committee within Plessey's over the period. In addition shop stewards in the company's telecommunications factories were also part of an industry wide organisation of stewards. The role of the combine committee had a number of weaknesses and should not be exaggerated. Nonetheless, it did play an important part in generating solidarity throughout the company over pay, redundancies and support for occupations. That support helped in the maintenance of morale and, in some cases (e.g.Beeston support for Interconnect), in weakening company attempts to undermine a struggle by transfering work elsewhere. It played an even greater role in publicising the occupation tactic throughout the company and thus significantly carrying forward its development.

British Leyland: The BLMC company has had an active combine committee for some years. In fact such a committee existed within one of its predecessors - the B.M.C. company. This latter was exampled by the TUC General Council in 1960 as one of those bodies which serve as challenges to "established arrangements".

Again the role of the combine committee should not be exaggerated but on many occassions it has played an active role in co-ordinating efforts throughout the company. At least five occupations occurred in

Britain, one in Portugal and one in Italy over the period. The first of the British occupations occurred at the Cowley factory in April 1972 and helped to take the tactic into the heart of the thinking of Leyland workers. As David Buckle, the local TGWU district secretary, expressed it the Cowley workers were "making history"[1]. Significant combine support, however, was mainly to be extended to the much longer occupation at the T.E.T. Basingstoke factory which began in August of the same year. Prior to the occupation the executive co-chairman of the combine committee, Eddie McGarry declared that,

> "We believe a shorter working week is the most important thing for the working class, particularly with a million unemployed. And we will back any action they (Basingstoke workers) call for . . . They only have to put forward a call and we will act" (2).

Such a call was forthcoming and three weeks later a twenty-four hour solidarity strike was called throughout British Leyland. Shortly after a mass picket of the factory was supported by Leyland workers from other factories and the following day the Basingstoke workers voted to begin the occupation[3]. On the 18th of August the combine committee executive called for a picket of BLMC's London headquarters and the blacking of Basingstoke gearboxes.

Addressing a meeting of the company's Coventry Morris engines' plant the same day the Basingstoke convenor, Gorden Owen-Jones, stated that,

> "We are quite happy with what the combine executive are doing for our members. We can handle the situation at Basingstoke but to win our fight the moral and financial support of the rest of BLMC is essential and today we have been promised just that" (4).

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1. 'The Morning Star', 12th April 1972
2. 'The Morning Star' 13th July 1972
3. There were only 18 votes against.
4. 'The Morning Star', 19th August 1972.

The Morris workers went on to "unanimously endorse (a) call . . . for a one-day token stoppage on August 28th". On the day twenty-four thousand BLMC workers came out. Five factories in the Lancashire area came out along with workers at the factories of Bathgate, Cowley and Birmingham. The Cowley factory, of course, had already been involved in an occupation themselves and the Bathgate and Birmingham factories were later to stage their own[1].

A lobby of national talks at York the following month was supported by both Cowley and Birmingham workers along with those from the company's Southall factory which was also to become engaged in occupation action at the end of 1975. The lobby had been called for by the combine committee and the talks included the issue of the Basingstoke factory on the agenda.

The occupation tactic itself was on the agenda of the thinking of BLMC combine leadership and during the Conservative Government's imposed three-day week policy in the winter of 1973-74 Cowley workers walked back into work in response to a combine stewards' call to occupy those factories where the three-day week was in force[2].

Throughout the period the combine committee and combines of particular union stewards took concerted action throughout British Leyland. In January 1975, for example, "several hundred" TGWU motor industry shop stewards (including Leyland stewards) are reported to have met to discuss

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1. The Bathgate action occurred after 1975.

2. The Cowley action is not clearly an occupation although the workers are reported to have gone into the factory on a day when it should have been closed due to the regulations.

the "serious situation in the motor industry"[1]. That same month four hundred shop stewards from sixty BLMC plants met and passed a resolution proposing that "full public ownership of BLMC and distributors" be taken as "the only answer" to the economic crisis facing the company[2]. In April the co-chairman of the combine committee, Derek Robinson, issued a warning to the company on redundancies,

"Should any of the plants within the corporation be faced with forced redundancies, the other plants will give whatever assistance is required"(3).

The theme of redundancies was again taken up at a national delegate conference of TASS members within BLMC: a pledge was made to resist redundancies.

The Leyland combine committee, like its BMC predecessor, has continued to co-ordinate the efforts of shop stewards across a variety of unions. Representing many more than a hundred-thousand workers it is a body more powerfull than a majority of TUC unions. It has built up a unity throughout sections of the company that has helped to sustain and spread worker occupations throughout the company. As a result of this experience it was able to provide valuable advice to fellow Italian workers occupying the company's Milan factory. (The fact that the Milan workers turned to their British counterparts for advice suggests that the British experience may have influenced their own decision to occupy). While it is not clear that the committee played a directly vital role in any of the other occupations it was certainly vital to the Basingstoke occupation. The concessions that those workers achieved was greatly aided

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1. 'The Morning Star', 9th January 1975.
2. 'The Morning Star', 31st January 1975
3. 'The Morning Star', 4th April 1975.

by combine committee organised solidarity.

Thorn: When the Fisher-Bendix workers occupied their factory in January 1972 the company lacked a combine committee. The occupation was to end that situation. Naturally the driving force for the development came from the Fisher-Bendix stewards. Well in advance of their occupation they had taken steps to establish a hardship fund; they had consulted UCS stewards to gain advanced knowledge of the enhancement of an occupation; they had campaigned to gain local trade union support and the support of their national officials, and they had attempted to win advanced support from other workers in the Thorn group. In this latter respect there was no combine committee to draw upon so the Fisher-Bendix stewards set about building one up. Sybolically the first meeting of the new combine committee was to take place in the board room of the now occupied Fisher-Bendix factory. It was attended by stewards from Birmingham, Bradford, Bromley, Enfield, Leicester, and Merthyr[1].

The first resolution of the new combine committee was to state that,

"the Thorn combine committee endorse the action taken (at Fisher-Bendix) . . . and pledge solidarity" (2).

Support was forthcoming and, added to the massive local and national support, helped the Fisher-Bendix to victory. According to the convenor, Jack Spriggs,

"All the workers responded magnificently. This was met with an equal response from other workers, both in the district and throughout the country. The sit-in committee helped to keep up morale with different kinds of entertainment and the need for discipline was stressed continually"(3).

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1. E.Johnston, 1975, p.36.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

The key to the strength of the Fisher-Bendix occupation clearly lay with the internal shop floor organisation. This organisation pioneered the combine committee and in turn was then further strengthened in its campaign. Apart from giving support to the Fisher-Bendix workers the combine committee does not seem to have played any important part in generating or supporting any other occupations within the company. It is likely that the committee would have been effectively weakened when Thorn's sold the Fisher-Bendix concern, shortly after, to I.P.D.

The GEC-EE Company: In many ways action at the GEC-EE company supports the claim of Johnston (1975) that combine committees are as yet weakly formulated. There is evidence of links between GEC workforces and between other stewards across industries but it is a lack of any strong co-ordinated shop floor effort that has led to many weaknesses and divisions among GEC workers.

This lack of any large scale co-ordination has persisted throughout a period of intense conflict within the company over wages and redundancies. This was to prove fatal in some cases - especially in the struggle by Harlow workers and those at Woolwich in 1968-69 and in the case of the planned work-in at three Liverpool factories in the autumn of 1969.

In the early part of 1968 the Harlow workers fought a lone battle to save the four hundred jobs under threat. They managed to get the local community behind them in their battle and some concessions were won. However, the fact that their campaign was isolated did weaken their fight and morale began to sag fairly quickly with many employees voluntarily seeking new jobs[1].

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1. S.Newens and C.Adams, 1969, pp.173-4.

Later that year workers at the Woolwich factory faced closure and the loss of five-and-a-half thousand jobs. These workers also waged a fierce battle and drew upon the support of the local community but they also faced isolation in terms of intra-company support. After blacking the removal of work, machinery and knowledge from the factory for several weeks the workforce, by a narrow majority, conceded defeat and accepted a redundancy agreement. Interestingly, before their defeat the shop stewards had declared that they would not,

"allow any machinery, plans or knowledge to leave the Woolwich factory. . . If the management ask for machinery to be moved out we shan't move it, and if they bring anyone in to move it, we shall stop everyone working and gather round the machinery to stop it being moved" (1).

This would appear to be the idea of an embryo occupation. Nonetheless, it was not to be; isolation effectively weakened and killed off the fight.

Some move to co-ordinate efforts within GEC was made in 1969 with the establishment of a National Joint Negotiating Council (NJNC). This body did not, however, meet up to the needs of the situation. It consisted largely of full-time union officers at the highest level and as such was divorced from the shop floor and from taking effective action: the NJNC acted as a slow channel for grievences.

Shop floor co-ordination did manage to begin to get off the ground in Liverpool towards the middle of that year. In August it was announced that over six-and-a-half thousand jobs were to go at three Liverpool factories. By now the stewards at these factories had the experience of the Harlow and Woolwich factories. They saw that isolation and traditional forms of struggle had not succeeded. They were thus,

"determined that they should win but the form of action which could be effective would have to be spectacular and would have to attract wide-scale public sympathy and support" (2).

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1. 'The South East London Mercury', February 18th 1969.

2. G.Chadwick, 1970, p.182.

The shop stewards managed to start the process of uniting the workforce by forming an "Action Committee" which spanned all three factories. As with the UCS stewards they had the initial problem of uniting separate geographical locations in the face of a problem which faced them unevenly. Redundancies were facing all three workforces but the least number - three hundred - was to take place at the largest and least organised or militant factory (East Lancs Road).

The problem of unity was a crucial one. The Action Committee was a begining and it gave much time to "discussing with the stewards and men in all three factories"[1]. But many weaknesses were not effectively tackled and the unity quickly crumbled. To begin with, the idea of a work-in to fight redundancies was put to a mass meeting by the Action Committee. The idea, however, was part of a list of demands and may not have had sufficient attention at the meeting which agreed the demands en bloc. It has been claimed[2] that the work-in, decided upon after the mass meeting, was chosen from a position of weakness: lacking a national GEC combine committee the Action Committee felt that some form of desparate action was required to win the day.

A serious problem lay in the fact that having decided upon a work-in very little attention was given to winning the workforce behind it. Much time was now spent touring the country winning official union backing; (very little was forthcoming). No mass meetings were held to build the morale of the workforce, and only once was any other form of communication put out[3].

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1. G.Chadwick, 1970, p.184.
2. Ibid.
3. A "newsheet" was put out on one occassion.

There was also a serious technical problem with a work-in. While at UCS the workers could exercise control over an asset which became more valuable with each day of work[1] the GEC workforce would have found large-scale difficulties in securing both inputs of material and outlets to the market.

As time moved nearer the planned work-in date of September 19th sections of the workforce began to oppose continuing with the idea. At the same time the management were sending letters to every employee involved threatening legal consequences if a work-in was embarked upon. Even now mass meetings were only called by the Action Committee two days prior to the work-in date, and these were prompted by the initiative of those opposing the action. A sign of the weakness of the Action Committee approach is revealed in the fact that a vote against the work-in was recorded at all three factories including Netherton, the best organised[2], where a vote of sixty percent went against the plan, ended even the existing overtime ban and recorded a vote of "no confidence" in their shop stewards.

This is a case where the existance of a combine committee could have made a crucial difference to the outcome of the struggle. A contrast can also be drawn between the effectiveness of the GEC Action Committee and the UCS Co-ordinating Committee. It has been argued that the main

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1. Cf. K.Coates, 1973, p.23. There was £90 million of shipping under construction when the work-in began.

2. The Netherton factory was to be completely closed down except for the aircraft section. And complete closure was planned for the other well organised Napier factory.

difference lay not in questions of "militant tradition" or "able leadership". "Both areas had a strongly militant tradition, and both had produced able leaders" (1).

The major difference was technical. This however is not the case. Leadership was a problem. The fact that the GEC Action Committee faced technical difficulties is due to their own error in choosing the work-in as the best form of struggle. As Coates (1973) admits,

"working in was an unrealistic goal, and . . . the same result could have been achieved by a sit-in which announced its intention of working on, once the problems of supplies and services had been solved with the help of the trade unions" (2).

The work-in idea had been put to a mass meeting as only part of the possible Action Committee plan of attack. The meeting had agreed to mandate the Committee to,

"take any further steps necessary including sit-ins and other measures"[3].

Sit-ins are referred to rather than a work-in, and almost as a last resort, yet following the meeting the Action Committee decided on a work-in. They then asked to see the B.B.C. play "The Big Flame" inorder to develop their ideas on the project. It has been suggested that the play helped to inspire the idea of a work-in among the Action Committee[4]. This possibility only furthers the idea that the action was badly thought out. The play, although set in Liverpool, concerned the revolutionary seizure of a dockyard with the aim of begining a revolutionary process within Britain; an idea which had little in common with the limited objective of

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1. K.Coates, 1973, p.23
2. Ibid.
3. Cf.G.Chadwick, 1970, p.195.
4. Ibid.

preventing redundancies at GEC. Having agreed on the work-in tactic the next move should have been to gear up the workforce for the possibility: in no way had the idea been explored at the mass meeting. But this was not done. Instead the propaganda battle, unlike at UCS, was won by the company. The company played on the fears of the workforce regarding the legal situation of a work-in and their letter was reproduced in full by the 'Liverpool Echo'[1].

When opposition was at its height the Action Committee committed the strategic error of allowing the first of three mass meetings to take place at the weakest and largest (East Lancs Rd) factory[2]. Once the vote was lost there then the two smaller factories were more influenced to follow suit.

Leadership clearly was a decisive factor differentiating UCS from GEC stewards. To repeat Thompson and Hart (1972), at the UCS

"decisive leadership on the one hand, mass democracy on the other, is perhaps the formula which sums it up best".

At the end of the day the UCS workers triumphed and the GEC workers were defeated but the importance of the Liverpool plan lived on. The planned work-in had drawn in a lot of local support and was to influence other occupations within the locality[3] and in the company within two years.

Drawing from the lessons of the weaknesses and failures within the company the shop stewards at the Rugby plant called on the union side of the NJNC to set about developing a combine committee, holding an inquiry

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1. The company letter played heavily on such terms as "irresponsible" and "unconstitutional" to decribe the work-in plan. Cf. G.Chadwick, 1970.

2. According to Chadwick (1970) the meeting was taken over by a group of workers not affected by the redundancy plan. They had carefully prepared posters denouncing the occupation and had megaphone equipment. They quickly gained access to the platform and moved a resolution against the occupation, the overtime ban, and the shop stewards

3. Fisher-Bendix occupation for example. Interview with Jack Spriggs, convenor at Fisher-Bendix, October 1976.

into the company's redundancy plans and arranging a meeting of shop stewards throughout the company. In reply the NJNC union leaders stated that,

"It was agreed that no useful purpose would be served by seeking the sort of enquiry that had been suggested, and that the holding of the meeting as proposed would not be practicable" (1).

In the absence of a combine committee the fight of GEC workers was considerably weakened but it did not prevent a number of occupations from occurring and receiving assistance from other GEC workers. But the case should not be overstated.

The Liverpool campaign in 1969, indirectly at least, influenced five further occupations within the Manchester area during the spring pay battle of engineers[2]. There was some degree of association and co-operation between these factories leading up to and during the fight. When the pay battle spread to other areas one of the few Sheffield factories to be occupied on this issue was owned by GEC, and these received direct support from GEC workers in Preston.

There is some evidence that TASS members within GEC helped to spread the idea of the occupation tactic to other companies through broad industry combine committees of TASS members. Both TASS and ASTMS GEC members had telecommunications' combines which involved stewards from Delta Metal, Pye, BICC, STC, Pirelli and Plessey; stewards from the latter two later became involved in occupations within their own companies.

In summary, the picture at GEC regarding solidarity presents an uneven pattern. In its weaknesses it reveals the important role a combine committee can perform. It also reveals that organisation per se is not

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1. C.I.S. Anti-Report on "The General Electric Company Ltd", p.23

2. G.Chadwick, 1970; J.Arnison, April 1972.

the key: the key is an important balance of organisation & leadership features. Nonetheless, the existance of a combine committee would likely have reversed several of the defeats experienced over the period. As the convenor at Harlow, Charles Adams, has made clear,

"The enormous weakness of the movement nationally was . . . clear. A national organisation of shop stewards and trade union representatives throughout the GEC/AEI combine . . . would have been a formidable force even for the men at the head of the new combine" (1).

In regard to the Woolwich situation even the 'Sunday Times' had the vision to see the problem:

"One of the more puzzling features of the whole story is that opposition from the shop floor was so fragmented and incoherent. If everybody in GEC had come out in protest over, say Woolwich, Weinstock's plans would have received a nasty set back" (2).

And finally, in regard to the Liverpool situation, Chadwick (1970) says,

"We may speculate whether, if such a (national stewards') committee had been functioning in September 1969, the proposed factory occupations would have taken place and that one of the Liverpool workers' chief inhibitions, a feeling of isolation, would have been overcome" (3).

Combine Committees in Perspective: As the GEC case illustrates in one direction and the UCS case in the other, combine committees (or some form of cross company organisation) can be the make or break of a battle within a large company. Solidarity helps to build and maintain morale, it provides financial support and can help to prevent the company from moving work from a factory in dispute. Among workplace occupations the importance of such organisation cannot be exaggerated; many weaknesses exist. This must, however, be put into the perspective that such organisation hardly exists at all in a large number of cases and thus the occupation workforces are relatively better organised. That said, there are

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1. S.Newens and C.Adams, 1969, p.174.
2. C.I.S. anti-report on GEC, op cit, p.23
3. G.Chadwick, 1970, pp.180-181.

several examples where such organisation has played an important role in the development of the occupation tactic: apart from the cases mentioned the powerful Lucas and Ford shop steward combines could have been referred to along with several other cases.

Organisation of the Third Type: rank and file centres of power.

The 1960 TUC General Council were here specifically concerned with attempts to establish shop stewards' organisations which cut across companies and industries and effectively performed the role of a large industrial or general union. In 1959 the TUC General Council were able to crush the Engineering and Allied Trades Shop Stewards National Council[1]; they had no such luck with the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions established in 1966. Interestingly the LCDTU chairman, Kevin Halpin, had been a shop steward at Ford's Dagenham plant and was one of the group of stewards purged by the company in 1962.

This body made some little impact during the Seamen's strike of 1966 but was to make its biggest effect from 1969 onwards. In April of that year it called a conference to discuss action against the Labour Government's White Paper "In Place of Strife". That conference helped to launch the political strike on May Day, and was the important factor behind several other such strikes over the next three years.

The LCDTU have always been careful to skate the boundaries of action within trade union rules[2]. The conferences it calls never lay down policy or take resolutions which would be binding on those taking part. Technically the conferences are held to <u>discuss</u> issues of major

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1. This body was convened in the name of Firth Brown (Sheffield) and Ford (Dagenham) shop stewards and invitations were sent to shop steward committees throughout the country. The move was crushed when the AEU Executive ordered a ban on any of their members taking part. The Firth Brown convenor was disciplined and suspended from holding office for one year.

2. Usually the skating is done on the infringement side of the rules.

importance to trade unionists. Nonetheless, these conferences are usually structured so that some form of a call for "an action day" is made continually from the platform.

The growing power of the LCDTU has been witnessed not only in the extent of the "action days" called but also offical trade union leadership support. At the April 1969 conference the speakers included Vincent Flynn, the leader of the printers' union SOGAT, and the Labour M.P. Norman Atkinson who eventually became the Treasurer of the Labour Party. Hugh Scanlon, the AEU President, although not in attendance sent a message of support to the conference: events had turned full circle, now the engineering workers' leader was supporting such organisation. At the same conference fourteen trade union district committees were represented along with forty shop stewards' committees which included Ford(Dagenham) and Firth Brown stewards[1]. The LCDTU have never called any conferences to specifically discuss the issue of occupations, although expressions of support have been directed at particular actions[2] and many of the organisations involved with it have been found to be equally involved in (or in support of) occupations[3].

Another body of this type is the 'Building Workers' Charter Group'; an organisation which unites building shop stewards across several unions, companies and sites. This body has had its leading members involved in

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1. The Firth Brown convenor went on to become the AUEW district secretary for Sheffield and in that role played a key role in the development of the River Don occupation.

2. Bill Freeman addressed the February 1973 conference as the leader of an ongoing occupation - at Briant Colour Printing.

3. See Chapter 3.

occupations or in providing assistance to such actions. It also played a substantial role in the Building Workers' national strike of 1972[1]. In May 1972, for instance, the Charter Group gave support to the action at Bryant's Ringway Priory site in Birmingham, and also to the action at the company's Market Street site in Manchester. In the latter case large sales of 'The Morning Star' are reported at the site and the workforce agreed a vote of thanks to the paper,

"for its support of the building workers' struggle" (2).

The importance of this is that the Group, at that time, was led by members of the Communist Party.

That same month Charter member Pete Kavanagh staged a one man occupation of a crane at the Guildford Street (London) site of Lovell's[3]. Other site workers went on strike and half-day solidarity strikes were staged at other sites in London - including workers at Cubitt's World's End (Chelsea) site who were themselves to stage an occupation just nine months later[4].

In January 1973 a mass meeting of Birmingham building workers met to consider action against the Bryant company for sacking union militants (who were Charter Group members). The meeting was addressed by Pete Carter, the leader of the Group, and the two-and-a-half thousand workers at the meeting agreed to,

"work for a sit-in on all (the 25) sites" (5).

Apparently the situation was never reached and the sacked militants were reinstated.

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1. Cf. J.Gollan, 1975.
2. 'The Morning Star', 22nd May 1972.
3. Kavanagh was at that time chairman of the Young Communist League.
4. The Lovell and the Cubitt's occupations were over the dismissal of militants
5. 'The Morning Star', January 18th 1973.

The following month the Cubitt site (Chelsea) was occupied as was a McAlpine site in London's Strand. Three workers at the McAlpine site occupied cranes while several hundred others picketed the site. The picket consisted of workers from several other sites, including the occupied Cubitt's and Lovell sites, in response to a call from the Charter Group.

In short, the third type of steward organisation has flourished since 1960 and outgrown the condemnation of offical union quarters. Mostly indirectly the LCDTU has played a key role in paving the way for occupations and in building support for them (see chapter 3), and in a much more direct fashion the Building Workers' Charter Group has played a vital role in initiating and winning support for occupations and the occupation tactic.

Other types of Grass Roots Organisation and Solidarity.

The Trades Councils: While the TUC General Council was busy directing its attention at national rank and file power centres it needed to look over its shoulder at some of its officially constituted organisations. The trades councils, for instance, have long been a problem for the TUC General Council. These bodies have existed long before the TUC[1] when they enjoyed an almost unchallenged authority to co-ordinate trade union efforts across a particular town or city. From time to time this challenge has become an open one as various trades councils sought to pursue action in defiance of TUC policy or General Council wishes. This was the case, for example, during the General Strike. It was also the case during the Seamen's strike and many of the actions against government legislation on trade unions and on incomes policy. At the April 1969 LCDTU conference

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1. Two or three major trades councils in fact helped to establish the TUC in 1868. These were Sheffield, Glasgow and Manchester.

seventeen trades councils sent representatives, and the number steadily grew at the following conferences. During the onset of the Cold War and the move against communists within the trade union movement many trades councils (including London) were disbanded by the TUC General Council. Trades councils continued on a small scale to be rebellious throughout the 1950s to the mid-1960s and then once again were taking action on a large scale; action not entirely to the liking of the TUC hierarchy.

Trades councils have played an extensive role in winning support for the various political strikes of the period, and the same is true in relation to worker occupations. It is fair to say that in many localities the trades council was the backbone of an occupation workforce's struggle. In many other cases the action of the trades council helped to spread the occupation tactic idea throughout a town, city, or region.

By 1969 there were four-hundred-and-ninety-six functioning trades councils in England and Wales alone. Shortly after the Liverpool GEC work-in plan was announced the powerful Liverpool Trades Council called a meeting to support the GEC workers. It was supported by over two hundred representatives of the organised trade union movement on Merseyside who, significantly

> "Pledged support for the takeover and, moreover, expressed the desire that such action should set a precedent for a new militant era in British trade union history" (1).

Very much so this trades council meeting helped to spread the occupation tactic throughout the Merseyside region; an area which to date has witnessed the greatest number of occupations of any region in the United Kingdom. At that meeting, for example, had been stewards from Fisher-Bendix. The Liverpool Trades Council's name was to crop up time and time again over

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1. G.Chadwick, 1970, p.185.

the next few years in connection with support for occupations. In 1972 alone the trades council called an all-Merseyside 24-hour general strike in support of the Fisher-Bendix workers, the striking miners, and against the Industrial Relations Act and ten months later a "day of action" in solidarity with Lucas (Liverpool) occupation.

In varying degrees different trades councils contributed to the developing use of the occupation tactic - see table 3. While the direct role should not be over stressed many trades councils were important in helping to publicise an occupation throughout the active trade union organisations of a locality and thus contribute to the growing local support received.

Intra-occupation solidarity: From the UCS work-in onwards occupations inspired other workers to action, occupation workforces sought advice from those who had taken action before them, and those experienced at occupying their workplace were usually ready to lend all kinds of assistance.

That the main aim of the UCS work-in was to save jobs is beyond question but in that action some of the shop floor leadership could see an additional, revolutionary, effect. Jim Airlie, speaking at the IWC conference in Newcastle in January 1972, stated that one of the aims of the work-in had been to inspire other workers to take the offensive against redundancies and closures. This kind of thinking (and action) is applied to several industrial problems by militant shop stewards. It is the same kind of thinking which says that if we defeat the ruling incomes policy here, at this factory or factories, then other workers will follow. It is a strategy which paid off on occassion and is well recognised by

TABLE 41

THE INVOLVEMENT OF TRADES COUNCILS IN WORKER OCCUPATIONS.

| Trades Council | Occupation supported. |
|---|---|
| Aberdare | Aberdare Cables; Purma. |
| Blackpool | Briant Colour Printing. |
| Cambridge & District | U.C.S. |
| Carlisle | U.C.S. |
| Consett | Leadgate |
| Glasgow* | U.C.S. |
| Hartlepool | Propytex[1] |
| Harrow* | Briant Colour Printing |
| Harringay | Briant Colour Printing |
| Lambeth | Briant Colour Printing |
| Lethchworth & District* | Briant Colour Printing |
| Liverpool* | Briant Colour Printing;Cammell Laird (Feb.75); Tillitson; GEC-EE (1969); Lucas(Liverpool). |
| Newhaven & District | Briant Colour Printing |
| Portsmouth | Briant Colour Printing |
| Sheffield* | Balfour Darwin; BSC River Don. |
| South Shields | Coles Cranes (Sunderland). |
| Sunderland* | Coles Cranes (Sunderland) |
| Wear Valley | Courtaulds; Strachans. |
| Wycombe* | Briant Colour Printing. |

+ Table compiled from interviews (Briant Colour Printing and Coles Cranes) and 'The Morning Star'. It is only meant as an indication of the likely extent of trades council support. In a large number of cases local trades councils gave support but their names have not always been reported.

1. A further 15 un-named trades councils are recorded as supporting this occupation. This gives a minimum total of 34 trades councils lending support to at least 14 occupations and 1 abortive action. The extent and type of action, of course, varies.

* These trades councils are known to have been involved in some or all of the various strikes called by the LCDTU.

government. It is a strategy which paid off against "In Place of Strife" (1969), the "Industrial Relations Act, 1971", and Conservative Government incomes policy in 1972 and 1974.

A number of occupations which followed the UCS work-in firmly claimed it to have been a direct inspiration to their own action. This was the case with Plessey workers in September of 1971, with Sexton workers in March 1972 and with Plessey workers as late as August 1974.

Beyond inspiration the UCS workers helped to give valuable advice to would-be occupiers and considerable finance was also provided. At Coles Cranes (Sunderland), for example, they received several thousand pounds from the UCS; a sum that made a serious difference to the Coles' workers ability to survive a three month struggle. Table 4 indicates just how widespread the interaction between occupation workers has been: thirty-three occupation workforces assisted thirty-three fellow occupations. In all fifty-one different workforces were involved in some form of inter-action. This kind of support (involving almost 25% of all occupations) has helped to spread and develop the tactic ever more rapidly. In these cases important advice could be passed on which other workers might not have been so able to provide.

Finally, in almost every occupation situation support was received from a multitude of shop floor organisations, i.e., trade union branches and joint shop steward committees, etc. A table representing this support would need to be several pages long. When some of the cases are considered it can be seen that such support played an important role in maintaining occupations. For example, no fewer than thirty-eight shop steward committees sent financial support to the Briant Colour Printing workers.

TABLE 42

CO-OPERATION BETWEEN OCCUPATION WORKFORCES.

| Occupation:- | Support to:- |
|---|---|
| ALLIS CHALMERS | UCS; Plessey (Alexandria). |
| BAYNARD PRESS | Briant Colour Printing |
| BRIANT COLOUR PRINTING | BLMC (Basingstoke); Mabutt & Johnson; Tillotson; TI; UCS. |
| BLMC (BASINGSTOKE) | Briant Colour Printing |
| BSC RIVER DON | UCS |
| COLES CRANES (DARLINGTON) | Coles-Cranes (Sunderland) |
| CROSSFIELD | Mabbutt & Johnson |
| CUBITT (LONDON) | Lovell (Guildford St, London); McAlpine (Strand) |
| FISHER BENDIX | Extrusion; Lucas-Cav(Liverpool); Sexton; Tillotson |
| FORD (DAGENHAM) | Briant Colour Printing; Scottish Daily News. |
| HAWKER SIDDELLY (BOLTON) | Metal Box |
| HAWKERS SIDDELLY (WOODFORD) | Sharstons |
| LEICESTER PHOTO & LITHO SERVICES | Briant Colour Printing |
| LOVELL (GUILDFORD ST) | McAlpine (Strand) |
| METAL BOX | Briant Colour Printing |
| MOLINS (LONDON) | Briant Colour Printing; Molins (Surrey & Bucks); UCS. |
| NVT (WOLVERHAMPTON) | NVT (Hants); Triumph Meriden. |

PLESSEY (ALEXANDRIA)

Allis Chalmers; Plessey (Beeston & Swindon); UCS.

PLESSEY (BEESTON)

Plessey (Alexandria & Swindon)

PLESSEY (ESSEX)

Plessey (Alexandria & Swindon)

PLESSEY (GERRARDS, SWINDON)

Plessey (Alexandria, Beeston & Swindon)

PLESSEY (SWINDON)

Plessey (Alexandria & Beeston)

PROPYTEX

Ever Ready

ROLLS ROYCE

Triumph Meriden

RUSTON-PAXMANS

Coles Cranes (Sunderland)

SCOTTISH DAILY NEWS

Kromberg & Schubert

SEXTON & SONS

Gainsbrough Cornford

SHAW

L.Gardner

SNOW ENGINEERING

Briant Colour Printing

TRIUMPH MERIDEN

Propytex

TI (WALLSALL)

Briant Colour Printing

UCS

Allis Chalmers; Briant Colour Printing; Coles Cranes (Sunderland); BSC River Don; Fisher Bendix; Imperial Typewriters; McNeil; Plessey (Alexandria); Propytex; Scottish Daily News; Sexton & Sons; Tube Investment.

VAUXHALL

Fisher Bendix

*Compiled from interviews and 'The Morning Star'.

The table is made up of reported cases, thus it represents the minimum degree of co-operation that occurred. Co-operation varies from a donation to joining fellow workers on their occupation.

That is in addition to the many trade union branches and district union organisations who gave support, the seven occupation workforces, and at least nine trades councils. Nor does it include the several thousand workers who either supported a march through London in solidarity with the occupation or a mass picket of one of the company's main suppliers.

In the case of Propytex many hundreds of TGWU and AUEW branches must have responded to have come up with, respectively, eight and two thousand pounds. And this was additional to the help received from sixteen trades councils and at least two other occupation workforces.

In one or two known cases the support of one workforce for an occupation helped to turn their ideas towards using the tactic when they in turn faced similar problems. This was the case, for example, with Baynard Press workers who gave support to the Briant's occupation six months prior to staging an occupation themselves over redundancies.

International Links.

Very few shop floor organisations have international links with fellow workers of the same company or industry in other countries. The fact that such links did exist among occupation workforces further reinforces the view that they are among the more advanced and better organised sections of the British labour movement.

At the international level BLMC, Plessey, Dunlop-Pirelli, UCS, Briant Colour Printing, and ITT workers have all been involved in international meetings of stewards from the same company or industry. In several cases international support was gained for an occupation in progress. This was true for the UCS, BLMC and Briant's workers, and in the case of Dunlop-Pirelli co-ordinated strikes against redundancies took

place internationall (in Britain and Italy). In the case of Plessey and ITT workers' efforts have been made to bring stewards together from different countries to discuss common problems, and possibly common action. This has also been the case with Ford shop stewards who have taken part in international meetings of car workers.

The ones that got away.

It can be shown that in a number of ways shopfloor and grass roots organisation is a vital factor in understanding the development, spread and success of workplace occupations. On the other hand, the critic is well able to point to a number of cases where such organisation existed but the workforce did not resist redundancies through militant action. However, it should be clear that what is being argued here is that shopfloor/grass roots organisation is a vital factor but not the only factor. It is linked to the question of leadership (see chapter 8) and to the nature of the organisation(s) involved (see chapter 7). Naturally situational factors also have to be taken into account.

In the study of railwaymen facing redundancy in Darlington in the early 1960s it was pointed out that three workshops were involved but only one of the workforce took militant action[1]. In all three cases trades council support could have been gained for action and shopfloor organisation existed at each workshop. A major difference lay in the fact that at two workshops Engineering shop stewards (AEU) were in the leading positions, i.e., at North Road and at E.E. To some extent the nature of the unions involved helps to explain the difference in action taken; Faverdale workers were N.U.R. led[2]. But this was not enough becuase EE workers did not engage in militant

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1. See Chapter 1.

2. For a distinction between the important differences between union stewardships see chapter 7. Cf. also Martin, 1968 who directly contrasts the NUR with the AEU.

action while North Road workers did. Ultimately, given that everything else was more or less the same[1], leadership appears to have been the decisive factor[2]. Part of the leadership question includes the important consideration that the North Road works had an active CPGB industrial branch.

In the North East region in the first part of the 1970s there were several occupations. To the fore in most cases were AUEW and TGWU members. However, not all organised workers facing redundancy in that region resorted to militant action. In two cases studied during this period TGWU workers, on the one hand, and AUEW workers, on the other, accepted redundancy pay and rejected a call for militant resistance.

Brick works: At a small brick works in South West Durham fifty or so TGWU organised workers faced closure. Already many workers in the region had been involved in well publicised workplace occupations. With this kind of precedent the shop steward involved called a meeting at a local pub to discuss the prospect of staging an occupation to defend their jobs. In the event only a handfull of the workforce turned up and this effectively determined that no action was taken. Those who turned up were the older elements of the workforce. Mostly they were over fifty years old, they had little chance of finding alternative employment, and they were not mobile. The majority of those that had stayed away and had already decided to accept redundancy pay were the younger, more mobile workers.

It should be noted that although these workers' shop steward had given a lead in the direction of militant action both he and his members had not been involved in militant action previously nor had they been involved

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1. Both workshops faced closure in the same period and in the same town; both involved railway construction work, i.e., locomotive production.

2. This point has been made earlier but in contrast between the GEC and the UCS workforces, see pp.155-163.

in any broader trade union concerns or organisational contacts, i.e., trades council affiliations, local demonstrations against the Industrial Relations Act, etc. In short, the question of leadership is concerned with a process of action over a given period. In fairness situational factors also undermined the leadership of the particular situation.

Engineering works: At a large engineering works in the Darlington area at the same time over three hundred AUEW organised members faced closure and again rejected their stewards' call for militant action. In this case the workforce had been involved in wider issues; having engaged in the engineering strikes against the actions of the N.I.R.C., and they were affiliated to the local trades council. In addition the engineering convener was a left-winger with some sympathies with the CPGB. However, there were a number of weaknesses within the situation. To begin with, the workforce was relatively new in that the factory had not been in operation for more than a handful of years. Added to this was the fact that, located in a new town, the workforce were originally drawn from all over the region. Both factors may have helped to prevent the establishment of a united workforce. More serious is the fact that the right-wing forces within the union were strong within the factory and the battles for control of the union in the factory were a microcosm of those going on for control of the AUEW District Committee. This meant that from time to time the convenership changed hands and that the left leadership at the time of the closure threat was weak and under pressure.

Thus it would seem that consistant leadership may be yet another dimension to the leadership question. But this case study surely points out that the question is by no means an easy one nor a clear cut one.

Nonetheless, it can be argued that it is a valid claim that shopfloor/grass roots organisation is a vital element in understanding the question of workplace occupations. There are problems in that the existance of such factors can be associated with the reverse of militant action but, on the other hand, in only one occupation can there be found an absense of such organisation.

Summary.

Shopfloor and grass roots organisation are important factors in explaining the development, spread and survival of workplace occupations. Occupation workforces are among the more highly unionised and better organised sections of British workers and in fact in only one of over two hundred cases was this not so. That is not to deny that the existance of such organisation guarentees that a certain course of action will be followed. Leadership is an important added consideration and again this can not be viewed unproblematically. A lot depends on the type of leadership and the factors with which the leadership has to contend.

Higher forms of shopfloor/grass roots organisation have a clearer association with workplace occupation developments. Combine committees, for instance, are to be found among a small minority of workforces[1] and yet occupation workforces appear to have been affiliated to a relatively sizeable number. This is even more the case with International associations of shop stewards. Both types of organisation reveal evidence of being important in the spreading of occupations. Finally, involvement with the LCDTU and its activities was high among occupation workforces. Although this organisation did not directly call for workers to occupy their factories in certain situations it did support such actions. Perhaps more importantly its role was effectively one of providing a certain kind of leadership which helped to create the positive conditions out of which workers would support the militant lead of their shop stewards.

1. Cf. Johnston, 1975, chapter 8.

inevitability of socialism. Class consciousness has to be developed out of the conflicts thrown up by the material basis. It has to be developed, shaped and formed by the intervention of a revolutionary leadership - relying on the adequacy of its interpretation of reality and of particular events.

Thus, I would argue that if we want to understand any given situation in the sphere of industrial relations we need to look at factors beyond the immediate circumstances. We need a theoretical understanding of the objective basis of class conflict and its development in a particular social formation. We need to know the contributions of significant revolutionary and other working class orientated parties to the industrial relations structure and climate generally and specifically. In this way we can understand the drives and influences that have shaped and will shape the given situation.

But we need to be cautious. The fact that leadership has to develop class consciousness means that we need not necessarily expect that development to be automatic; nor uniform - even across comparible workers; nor need we expect it to be lasting; nor need we expect it to be a full blown revolutionary consciousness; and nor need we expect it to be uncontradictory in its elements.

The history of working-class orientated parties (e.g., communist and social democratic) means that there has been a long history of different interpretations of reality, with consequent affects upon the development of class consciousness. Therefore, we might expect those following the lead of a revolutionary party to have experienced some shift in consciousness but we should not necessarily expect it to be fully in accord with